DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 395 050 UD 030 863

AUTHOR Lewis, Anne C.
TITLE Believing in Ourselves. Progress and Struggle in Urban Middle School Reform, 1989-1995.
INSTITUTION Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, New York, N.Y.
PUB DATE Nov 95
NOTE 257p.; Photographs may not reproduce well.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC11 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; *Educational Change; Educational Policy; Information Dissemination; *Instructional Leadership; Intermediate Grades; Junior High Schools; Knowledge Level; *Middle Schools; Networks; Principals; Program Evaluation; School Desegregation; *School Restructuring; *Urban Schools
IDENTIFIERS *Edna McConnell Clark Foundation; Reform Efforts

ABSTRACT

Beginning in 1989, 12 urban middle schools were able to draw on the resources of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation to work toward systemic reform. The five school districts supported by this initiative pledged to focus on high expectations, high content, and high support for students. Most of the schools, in Baltimore (Maryland), Milwaukee (Wisconsin), San Diego (California), Oakland (California), and Louisville (Kentucky), were very troubled. But one, in San Diego, represented diverse economic conditions because of voluntary desegregation efforts. This book, the third and final chronicle of the networking efforts of the Clark middle school project, shows that schools that floundered at the beginning of the project continued to do so because the desired reforms could not overcome the unwillingness of systems to change or because leadership was not able to move the systems. The report details many successes, but it gives equal attention to the context of urban middle grades reform. Why many students at some of the program's schools have brighter prospects than others is explored. Keys to success in school reform were deep professional knowledge and opportunities to share insights and experiences in ways that empowered school communities. Implications for educational policy are discussed. (Contains 52 references.) (SLD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 395 050

Believing Ourselves

PROGRESS AND STRUGGLE IN URBAN MIDDLE SCHOOL REFORM

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
M. Hayes Mizell
Edna McConnell
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

UD 030 043

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

FOREWORD BY ANITA A. HATTIANGADI
PHOTOGRAPHS BY TANA HOBAN
EPILOGUE BY M. HAYES MIZELL

3

BELIEVING IN OURSELVES

Believing in Ourselves

PROGRESS AND STRUGGLE IN URBAN MIDDLE SCHOOL REFORM 1989–1995

Anne C. Lewis

FOREWORD BY ANGELA BLACKWELL
PHOTOGRAPHS BY LIANA MIUCCIO
EPILOGUE BY M. HAYES MIZELL

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The stories in this report almost write themselves because they come from the hearts of those working so hard, even heroically to create better futures for young people who can so easily lose sight of goodness in their lives. I want to thank every one of those who talked to me and who wrote me such thoughtful comments. All of them are part of the larger story, even though they may not be mentioned by name. A special thanks to those who took time to read the manuscript and provide very helpful suggestions, including Terry Clark of the Educational Resources Group, Barbara Neufeld of Education Matters, and Anne Wheelock of Northeastern University. Most important, both the author and the readers have benefitted greatly from the contributions of the editors at the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. Their standards are high and so is the respect they show the efforts of those who participated in the Clark initiative.

On the covers: Muirlands language arts teacher Carol Barry chats with two students (front cover). Western science teacher Sandy Mayer, right, and students help upgrade the Ohio Riverfront (back cover).

For copies of the two previous books in this series on middle school reform in five cities–*Gaining Ground* and *Changing the Odds*, both by Anne C. Lewis– write or fax The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, 250 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10177-0026; Fax: 212-986-4558.

This book is published by The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, November 1995
Designed by Karen Davidson
Printed on recycled paper by Rasco Graphics, New York

CONTENTS

FOREWORD BY ANGELA BLACKWELL	6
INTRODUCTION	8
Urban Middle School Reform: The Beginning	10
PART I	
For the Record: Middle School Reform in Progress	20
Chapter 1: Real Teacher Empowerment	24
Chapter 2: The Development of Professionals	34
Chapter 3: Principal Development and Leadership	40
Chapter 4: Parent Involvement: A Misnomer for Urban Schools?	46
Chapter 5: Students, Reforms and the Bottom Line–Achievement	54
PART II	
The Reform Context: Putting the Pieces Together	72
Chapter 6: Power Pieces	74
Chapter 7: Assessment: Driving It, Not Being Driven by It	80
Chapter 8: The Union Story	88
Chapter 9: The Anomaly of Central Office Leadership	92
Chapter 10: Turning the Outside Inside	98
PART III	
Policy Implications	108
POSTSCRIPT	112
EPILOGUE BY M. HAYES MIZELL	114
BIBLIOGRAPHY	119

FOREWORD

BY ANGELA BLACKWELL

THERE IS NO WIZARD.

You remember the story. Dorothy, injured in a tornado, falls into unconsciousness and has an elaborate dream in which she travels to the land of the Munchkins where she seeks help in finding her way back home. The Munchkins give Dorothy a pair of magic slippers and instruct her to "follow the yellow brick road" to Emerald City where she will find the Wizard who can help her get home.

Along the way, Dorothy picks up friends who also have wishes for the Wizard. The Scarecrow wants a brain, the Tinman longs for a heart, and the cowardly Lion wants courage. When the four find the Wizard, he tells them that if they can destroy the wicked Witch he will grant their wishes.

After the foursome destroy the Witch, they are devastated to discover that the Wizard is a fraud and cannot help them. All is not lost, though, because in meeting this challenge, the Scarecrow emerges as the strategist who develops plans of action; the Tinman demonstrates compassion in fretting and worrying about the well-being of his friends; and the Lion forgets his fears in the face of extreme danger. And Dorothy only had to wake up from her dream to get home because she had never left home at all. All had the power to realize their dreams without the magic of the Wizard.

This is a great story because it makes the timeless point that in the final analysis we have within ourselves the power to meet our toughest challenges; but first we have to believe in ourselves.

Years ago, in Oakland, this story was used to inspire the school district to pursue educational excellence against tremendous odds and in an atmosphere of deep skepticism. Oakland's school district was encouraged to work for change immediately and not sit wishing for the "star" superintendent or the newest cutting edge teaching innovation. The message was that there are no easy answers, no wizards. The resources exist in Oakland to improve. Oakland took up that challenge and began the long road toward educational excellence.

As is evident from reading these honest, inspiring, often heart-wrenching accounts of urban schools struggling to improve educational outcomes, Oakland

and the other districts have not reached their goal. But they are trying, and they are learning.

When the final story of school reform in the 1980's and 1990's is told, it will be a story of learning. Reformers have seen time and again that if the intervention (no matter how good) does not have a plan for changing the system, the system will surely change the intervention. Systems matter. Experience has proven repeatedly that the right kind of leader is crucial for success. Leadership matters. It is now common wisdom that schools alone cannot produce the results that we seek. Communities matter. We know also that parents and care givers are powerful forces in the lives of children. We cannot ignore them and expect to succeed. And finally we have learned that to achieve the results we seek, the students themselves must want to learn and must believe that they can. Students must be included in planning and implementing change strategies. In short, complex challenges require holistic solutions.

It is time to apply these learnings. We can build urban school systems in which all children are expected to learn and in which they do learn. But first we must believe that we can. There are no wizards.

Angela Blackwell is Vice President of the Rockefeller Foundation in New York City.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Introduction

19

URBAN MIDDLE SCHOOL REFORM: THE BEGINNING

PRIDE.

It brims over in the eyes and words of John Perkins and Fanny Timmer as they describe their young students. At Western Middle School in Louisville their youngsters–poor, looked down upon by the rest of the system's schools, not expected ever to do anything spectacular–stunned the community with what they did do, not, as in all the years before, by what they didn't do. Their scores on Kentucky's new, tough performance assessments surpassed the threshold level assigned to the school. With no magnet programs and a high percentage of students considered learning disabled, Western outperformed all but three other middle schools in the district.

Others might have been surprised, but not these two sometimes crusty teachers, so accustomed to hoping–and knowing how little hope there is to go around. Together, they have spent more than 50 years at this school isolated in the old port area of the city, doing their best to educate students who probably would not finish high school, just like the students' parents and grandparents who had attended Western. In the past few years, however, Perkins, Timmer, and the rest of the staff at Western began to believe they could break the thongs of failure wrapped so tightly around their students. The teachers and principal came together on a vision of higher student achievement for Western students and worked hard to make it real.

As a result, Perkins was sure his eighth-graders "were up for those assessments." And Timmer, too, "knew they could do it." Instead of just a handful of achievers, they could count on many like Stacy Irhke, a shy but determined youngster who learned to "love" Shakespeare because she played Juliet in a school production and set her sights on a career in veterinary medicine before she left Western. Her mother had dropped out of the same school after the seventh grade. Stacy is now on the way to becoming the first person in her family to graduate from high school.

What Stacy and her fellow students accomplished put Western in a positive spotlight for the first time in its 65-year history. And earned a $96,000 bonus from the state for the teachers to spend as they wish.

SADNESS.

This is what Donna Blochwitz feels as she retires from teaching and from Frick Junior High School in Oakland. For the last five of the 10 years she taught at Frick, Blochwitz, in her always enthusiastic and sometimes zany way, tried everything and every way that came along to make teaching and learning better for her students. She volunteered to work out schedules for "castles," the houses that divided the school enrollment into smaller groups; started cooperative learning; and attended conferences with her own money to gather ideas on reform that she shared with other teachers.

A succession of three principals in five years, however, wore down the resolve of Blochwitz and other teachers. Their daily crises outshouted the constant stream of reform plans handed down by the district's central office. Enrollment dropped so far that the district began to use Frick as a way station for students scheduled for disciplinary hearings. The environment then required troubleshooting principals, each one more strict than the one before–and less able to carry out reforms that would make the school a better place for students. Nothing improved, not student achievement, their behavior, or teacher morale.

The regular appearance of fire engines–to put out fires that were symbols of student anger and lack of self control–led a recent graduate of Frick, now in a high school health sciences magnet, to echo Blochwitz in describing her former school. "It's sad," she says, "to be in a public school in this city and have that kind of thing happening all the time."

Blochwitz left Frick with "a broken heart."

A PARTING OF THE WAYS

These two schools appear to be very different, but they share much more than it seems. Both are typical inner-city schools trying to cope with students who each year become poorer, whose families often are increasingly as alienated from their children's lives as they are from the schools, whose teachers must turn around years of low expectations for students. In both schools, almost all students were eligible for Title I services (federal compensatory aid for poor, underachieving students). Each school also has a core of

"Equality of opportunity is a fundamental principle of American society and a right of all Americans. Extreme differences in the range of life chances between persons in one segment of American society and another, one racial or ethnic group and another, or one part of an urban area and another conflict harshly with this ethical standard."

Rebuilding Inner-City Communities, Committee for Economic Development, 1995

24

BEST COPY AVAILABLE 25

teachers willing to experiment, teachers who believe their students are capable of learning much more than in the past.

For five years, beginning in 1989, both schools were able to draw upon unprecedented resources to raise expectations and make sure their students were ready for challenging work in high school. They were part of a foundation-funded network of 12 schools serving inner-city middle grades students in Baltimore, Louisville, Milwaukee, Oakland, and San Diego.

The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation's Program for Student Achievement created the network, providing unfettered resources so long as the funds went toward using pivotal schools as wedges for systemic middle school reform. Launched at a time when concerns about young children and at-risk high school students took center stage in the media and policymaking, the program sought to draw attention to students at very formative ages—when they make crucial choices in education and in their lives. For young adolescents living in distressed urban areas, the choices were limited, indeed.

Selected from about 20 urban districts that had responded to the foundation's request for proposals, the network's five districts pledged to focus on three goals—high expectations, high content, and high support. Translated into specific objectives, being successful at the "three highs" would mean that between leaving the fifth grade and entering the 10th, students in the schools would:

- complete the middle grades curriculum on time;
- exhibit mastery of higher-order reasoning, thinking, and comprehension skills;
- exhibit improved self-esteem, self-efficacy, and attitudes toward school and schoolwork as a result of regularly engaging in supportive interactions with adults; and
- understand how different curricula can affect their career and/or post-secondary education options and select programs of study that will enable them to pursue their choices.

In selecting the sites for the project, the foundation looked for district leadership willing to undertake reforms that would be uncomfortable for the status quo. The districts, in turn, used their own criteria to choose the participating schools. For the most part, they selected schools that were really troubled—two each in Baltimore, Milwaukee, and San Diego; three each in Oakland and Louisville. The only true exception was a San Diego middle school—Muirlands—whose La Jolla neighborhood is one of the wealthiest in the district and where parents demand much from the school. However, one-third of Muirlands' students come from Barrio Logan across town as part of San Diego's voluntary desegregation plan. Muirlands' challenge was to bring the achievement of

The network's five districts pledged to focus on three goals—high expectations, high content, and high support.

"Most urban school systems in this nation...do not have a clear, coherent vision of what they want middle schools to be and do. Some school systems may have outdated, jargon-laden mission statements for the middle grades, but if they have them, they are probably lifeless products of a bureaucratic exercise. That is not the kind of vision I am talking about. What is needed...is a vision by your school systems that provides those of you at the building level with a framework for reform, direction, hope, and support.... The lack of such a vision is one reason middle schools in so many urban areas are in such trouble, adrift and without focus."

M. Hayes Mizell, director of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation's Program for Student Achievement, in a speech to a conference of the Clark network, Milwaukee, 1992

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

its minority students much closer to that of its neighborhood students.

If the Clark Foundation had wanted a comfortable project with guaranteed successes, it would not have chosen these particular urban districts. Highly distressed neighborhoods, where most of the students in the Clark schools live, are isolated from services, offer few employment opportunities, and are overrun with social problems. Baltimore and Milwaukee, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, rank eighth and ninth in the number of residents living in distressed neighborhoods. The other three cities rank from 31st to 44th.

Another approach, according to a study for the Woodrow Wilson Foundation,[1] defines the health of cities by their "elasticity," or their capacity for population growth. Four of the five Clark sites are in the bottom category here—no elasticity whatsoever. San Diego is placed in the highest elasticity group (out of five categories).

When cities can no longer grow, their populations become even more isolated, usually along racial as well as poverty lines; unemployment rises; and social problems increase. Traditional power structures that often marginalize the influence of school boards and superintendents hold sway, more comfortable with their habits of control than with undertaking any radical action.

The conditions and performance of urban schools in situations like these are in crisis, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching observed in a 1988 report. "No other crisis—a flood, a health epidemic, a garbage strike or even snow removal—would be as calmly accepted without full-scale emergency intervention." Yet, as the Clark project began, most of the cities—or their school districts—lacked any sense of urgency on school reform and particularly within the middle grades.

Very seldom do policymakers—or many teachers or principals—see the crisis as young people do. At an Oakland junior high school where the principal considered discipline to be under control, recent graduates told of fearing to go to school. "I knew when school began every September," said one young girl, "that there would be a new gang in charge." In seventh grade, it was the Female Lynch Mob; in eighth grade, it became Nothing But Trouble; and in ninth grade, the Lost Girls. The progression of these gang names in itself vividly tells a desperate story of life for young teens.

In Baltimore, living in a distressed neighborhood means that Calverton Middle School students must rush home each day after school—to get through Poplar Grove before the drug pushers come. In Milwaukee, Parkman Middle School Principal Lafayette Golden wants one small change in district policy—to allow students living closer than two miles to ride a bus. Many of his students must walk through dangerous streets or parks; the absentee rate is high because, he says, students are too scared to come to school.

If the Clark Foundation had wanted a comfortable project with guaranteed successes, it would not have chosen these particular urban districts.

FIVE CITIES, TWELVE SCHOOLS

Data based on 1994–1995 school year. Students whose annual family income was $19,695 or less (for a family of four) qualified for free lunch.

BALTIMORE

CALVERTON

Student enrollment: 1,143
74% eligible for free lunch
All students proficient
in English
3 Principals during 1989–1995

RACE/ETHNICITY
African-American 94.1%
White 5.5%
Hispanic and
Native American .4%

WEST BALTIMORE

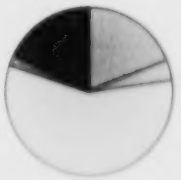
Student enrollment: 1,672
70% eligible for free lunch
All students proficient
in English
1 Principal during 1989–1995

African-American 95%
White 4%
Asian and
Native American 1%

MILWAUKEE

KOSCIUSZKO

Student enrollment: 745
85% eligible for free lunch
30% with limited proficiency
in English
3 Principals during 1989–1995



African-American 19%
Asian 4%
Hispanic 57%
Native American 2%
White 18%

MILWAUKEE

PARKMAN

Student enrollment: 579
87% eligible for free lunch
All students proficient
in English
3 Principals during 1989–1995

RACE/ETHNICITY
African-American 98%
Asian, Native American,
and White 2%

SAN DIEGO

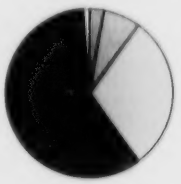
HORACE MANN

Student enrollment: 1,889
86% eligible for free lunch
56% with limited proficiency
in English
2 Principals during 1989–1995

African-American 22%
Asian 35%
Hispanic 32%
White 10%
Other 1%

MUIRLANDS

Student enrollment: 995
27% eligible for free lunch
15% with limited proficiency
in English
2 Principals during 1989–1995



African-American 3%
Asian 7%
Hispanic 30%
White 59%
Other 1%

LOUISVILLE

IROQUOIS

Student enrollment: 952
45% eligible for free lunch
All students proficient
in English
2 Principals during 1989–1995

RACE/ETHNICITY
African-American 26%
White 74%

SOUTHERN

Student enrollment: 942
63% eligible for free lunch
All students proficient
in English
1 Principal during 1989–1995

African-American 44%
White 56%

WESTERN

Student enrollment: 836
68% eligible for free lunch
All students proficient
in English
2 Principals during 1989–1995

African-American 38%
White 62%

OAKLAND

FRICK

Student enrollment: 491
61% eligible for free lunch
15% with limited proficiency
in English
3 Principals during 1989–1995

RACE/ETHNICITY
African-American 81%
Asian 3%
Hispanic 14%

KING ESTATES

Student enrollment: 575
57% eligible for free lunch
3% with limited proficiency
in English
2 Principals during 1989–1995

African-American 94%
Asian 1%
Hispanic 4%
White 1%

ROOSEVELT

Student enrollment: 984
74% eligible for free lunch
58% with limited proficiency
in English
4 Principals during 1989–1995

African-American 20%
Asian 56%
Hispanic 22%
White 1%

The majority of students in the Clark network schools were from very poor families, eligible for free or reduced-price lunch programs. (Muirlands again was an exception, but almost all of its barrio students were eligible for the lunch programs.) Put simply, poverty levels were a given: in all the schools but Muirlands, at least two-thirds of the students qualified for poverty programs.

In some, poverty had conditioned the students' expectations for themselves over several generations. "Many of our students rented the limo for the eighth-grade prom because they knew this was the only graduation they ever will have," says Fanny Timmer of Western Middle School in Louisville. In some cases, an inner-city school—or any school at all—was a new experience. Horace Mann Middle School in San Diego became a predominantly English-as-a-second-language school during the Clark grant years. Many students have had few years, some none, of schooling, and the staff must scramble not only to find ways of communicating with a student body speaking more than two dozen languages but also to learn how to deal with tribal conflicts within groups of students, such as the Somalis. Just as San Diego has become a beacon for immigrants from around the world, Mann is "the first-stop middle school," Principal Julie Elliott says of her diverse student body.

The Clark network schools shared other characteristics—low student performance, alienation from parents, high student and teacher turnover, and a loss of purpose (if they ever had one) of being a middle-grades school. Some had been reconfigured as "middle" schools years ago from junior high schools (usually by changing to grades six through eight), but few of the philosophical changes that are supposed to define a middle school seemed apparent, such as interdisciplinary learning, family groupings, or student-centered support services. In Oakland, the three participating schools still spanned the junior high school grades of seven through nine, and they followed the typical "junior" model, with departments and a "sink-or-swim" attitude toward the developmental needs of students.

Low-performing schools seem alike in many other ways. They become, over a long period of time, "safe" schools for mediocre teachers. They are the last stop for these teachers, schools without the energy or vision to help them improve their instruction and without the recourse of sending them on to some other school. Urban districts that use magnet schools to hang on to white/affluent families are blind to the effect on the schools left out of the picture. "Every bright kid that I lose hurts us all," said Cheryl DeMarsh just before she left as principal of Iroquois Middle School in Louisville. The magnets might have been started for the right reasons, "but why should magnet schools be the only ones that motivate students?" she asks. "Why shouldn't we have such expectations and values for all children?"

Sometimes when a school is at the bottom, districts treat it as a goner. Oakland did this by using

Frick as a last stop for juvenile offenders. The Clark schools that slipped backward over the five years of the grant rarely were seen to be in a crisis situation by their own districts until outsiders, such as the state, made them take notice.

By the end of the foundation's project (the 1993–94 school year), the districts altogether had received $5.7 million to implement reforms. The foundation gave another $4 million to external organizations, each one offering a different service. They brought in curriculum ideas and experts to provide technical assistance to schools and districts, created local partnerships, developed parent involvement efforts, and conducted ongoing evaluation of the reforms.

During the five years of the project, about one-half of the schools made progress. The other half had little to show for the time and investment. That the outcomes were so different is not so much a reflection of what the schools did as the result of an uneven capacity of urban systems to change. Schools individually may have their "15 minutes of fame" as reformers, but the moments of success flee unless the districts and communities support the schools in their efforts, reforming themselves in the process.

This book is the third and final chronicle of the Clark middle school network. In *Gaining Ground*, a report at the end of the first two years of the project, schools were doing lots of "things" under the umbrella of reform. Two years later, *Changing the Odds* found some schools shaping a vision, focusing resources on it, and spreading best practices to other schools. That volume also began to document success and failure, trying to understand why, with the same resources and opportunities, schools produced such uneven results from their reform efforts.

No definitive answers are possible even now that the project is over. Yet, five years of experience with middle grades reform in these districts provides the basis for perceptions to become clear pictures, ideas to gel, success to be defined, and the author's impatience to grow. Schools that floundered from the very beginning were still doing so at the end of the project, not because anyone intentionally wanted to fail, but because the desired reforms could not overcome the unwillingness of systems to change or leadership unable to move the systems.

This report is about successes, some of them extraordinary, but it gives equal attention to the context for urban middle grades reform, which is unfortunately almost always full of struggles. For some schools, this meant failure at reform. But we hope that *Believing In Ourselves* will help us understand why many students now in high schools in some of the five cities have more secure futures than many others just like them in different cities.

There had been high hopes for all.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Part I

FOR THE RECORD:
MIDDLE SCHOOL REFORM IN PROGRESS

HOW VERY NAIVE EVERYONE WAS!

In their 1989 proposals, the five school districts rightly diagnosed the problems urban middle grades students faced—low expectations by teachers, impersonal environments, lack of knowledge about adolescent development by teachers, and bumpy transitions from the elementary grades, among the most common.

None of the districts looked at their own organization and relationships with schools as sources of problems. Nor did they anticipate any such soul searching along the way. If they conceived a role for central offices at all, it was to run projects and collect the data required by the grant.

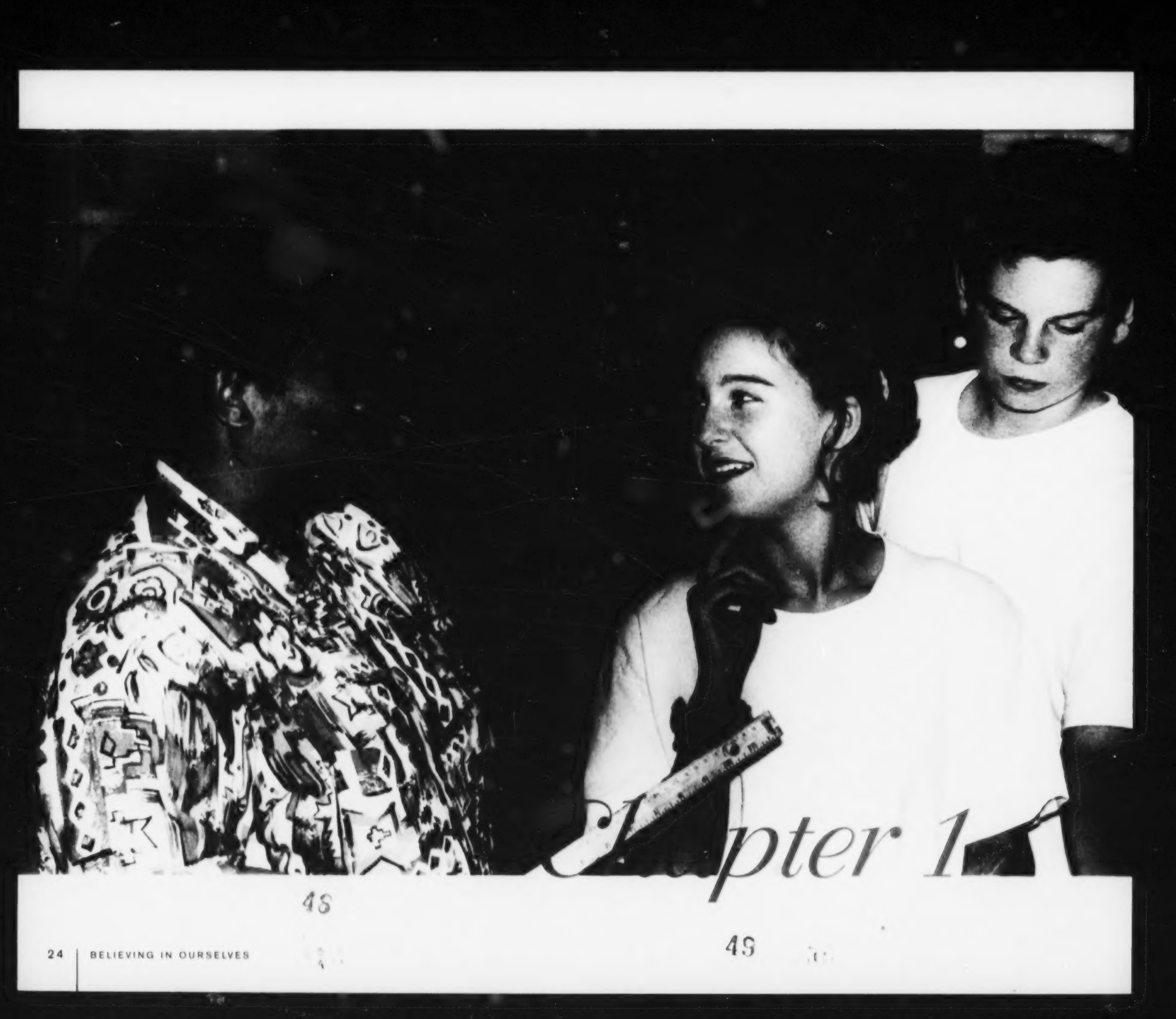
Similarly, as they'd done with foundation grants for years, the schools planned to undertake "activities" to meet the objectives of the Clark grant. They said they wanted to add a period to the daily schedule, or provide staff development to increase teachers' sensitivities about early adolescents, or reduce tracking (with few details about how), or expand parent involvement, or provide two-day seminars (or summer institutes, or monthly meetings) to train teachers in various ways, or create cross-grade committees.

While both the districts and the schools seemed to understand, in global terms, that there were problems to be solved, they underestimated what it meant to attempt real *change*. They also probably didn't think very much about the barriers. Ahead of them would be school and district politics, a smattering (and smothering) of programs/ideas they would be asked to assess for their needs, competing priorities, the excruciatingly slow process of developing a critical core of teachers excited about change, and a new experience for most—the use of data to determine where they were and where they needed to go.

In candor, the foundation also was unrealistic about the capacity of the districts and schools to internalize middle grades reforms, as well as the time it would take to see significant change.

Nevertheless, in the midst of all these difficulties, a few of the systems found a voice for districtwide middle school change largely because of the lessons they were learning from the project schools. Many of the schools reshaped their "activities" into a vision and actions that moved them forward. Those that changed the most only faintly resemble the schools they were at the beginning of the project. The truly profound change, of course, took place between teachers and students.

For reform to succeed, change must take place at every level, from the district office to the local classroom. At Mann Middle School, where this young woman studies, teachers and students are forming a new relationship.



Chapter 1

REAL TEACHER EMPOWERMENT

Teacher empowerment is a catchy phrase, writ large into many school district strategic plans with little understanding of what it means other than giving teachers decisionmaking over copy equipment or field trip sites. However, as Stanford University researcher Milbrey McLaughlin and others point out, true teacher empowerment is not structural. Power comes from what teachers know and how that changes their practice. It is their dedication to professional knowledge.

The most successful schools and teachers in the Clark network significantly changed their attitudes and skills because deep professional knowledge and opportunities to share insights and experiences empowered them to do so.

It's Wednesday afternoon at Mann Middle School in San Diego. We're in one of the spacious classrooms of the eighth-grade Orion team, organized like the rest of the school to include core subject areas for groups of 120-160 students and to personalize a sprawling campus of some 2,000 students. Ordinarily, the room would be abuzz with youngsters working on projects together in groups. However, on Wednesdays students go home after lunch and teachers stay to eat lunch together as a total faculty, about 100 full-time staffers, and then meet as departments or teams. This day it is the Orion team that is buzzing, planning their presentation for a state meeting and refining content for a unit on bridges.

The phone rings (all classrooms at Mann have telephones, a necessary addition for a school spread among six mostly multi-level buildings). The call is from a teacher in a Clark school across country who is working on one of the units developed by the Orion team. "She's got some really great ideas," says English teacher Barbara Quinlan after hanging up the phone. "We should talk about them."

This brief exchange illustrates several facets of teacher empowerment at Mann. It is teachers who decided how to use the early-release time, opting to meet alternately in team meetings and subject-matter sessions. It is teachers who decided to form teams

Barbara Lewis is part of a changed faculty at Western Middle School.

and work on interdisciplinary units in which each of the four team members relates his/her activities to the unit but always in a discipline-specific way. Bland and fun but irrelevant tasks are not allowed.

All the teams are not as well integrated as Orion is, but five years ago there was little cooperation among Mann teachers at all. Because of its leadership, the Orion team has shared its ideas at meetings and conferences all over the country with other teachers. So thoughtful are their ideas and so enthusiastic their presentations that a national publisher will use some of their units in an upcoming book. This is a recognition for classroom teachers that rarely comes their way.

The Orion team was the first to organize at Mann, now totally working in teams, and was put together, says math teacher Nancy Crouse, because of the research teachers conducted as they developed the plans for the Clark grant in 1988. Their four-person MESH (teachers of math, English, science, and history) has been on a learning curve ever since, developing, modifying, or dropping interdisciplinary units according to what their evaluations indicated.

Mann's students present a special challenge to the team, says Tom Carnes, the team's history teacher. About equally divided among Asian, Hispanic, African-American and white populations, the students not only bring diverse opinions—a plus—but also the potential for misunderstandings. Thus, the teachers always stress cooperation and teamwork in both the way students relate to each other and in content, such as the teamwork required for the Lewis and Clark expedition. The team understands that this is an essential part of teaching in a school like Mann.

The next step for the Orion team's teachers is to align their units with district content standards and assessments. Again, middle grades teachers are shaping this agenda. A committee of two teachers from each middle school in the district is working on developing standards and refining assessments for the middle grades. The standards, for example, will point out that it is not appropriate to teach math without also teaching problem solving, or to teach language arts without teaching students how to communicate their ideas. "This effort," explains Crouse, "is going to be wonderful accountability for our team work."

Mann's teachers, who could have been overwhelmed by the constantly growing enrollment, are more like "family," says Crouse. Because of their teams, teachers can offer personal attention, meet regularly with a counselor to discuss certain students' needs, and have closer parental contacts than before. For the Orion team, the most well-organized at Mann, interdisciplinary teaching has been the spark for their renewed professionalism. "We have to create new approaches or themes or we will go stale," says Crouse. They not only develop ideas together, she adds, but they also know what each member of the team is trying to accomplish; they swap ideas and discuss together the successes and the problems with their instruction.

BRIDGES, AS ORION BUILDS THEM

Bridges, one of the most popular of Orion's interdisciplinary units, was developed with several goals in mind—for students to see that bridges help them "get over" obstacles, allow the flow of goods and people between otherwise unconnected points, and span gaps that separate one person from another. The academic tasks include:

Math—Work with bridge blueprints and scale; measure length, height, area, etc.; blueprints used include those of the Coronado Bay Bridge in San Diego.

English—Read *Diary of an Early American Boy* (about a young boy in Connecticut whose father builds a mill and a covered bridge to get to it); write an essay on the topic of bridge as a symbol for bringing people together.

Science—Do experiments about the structure and stresses of a bridge, including concepts like trusses and compression.

History—Study the Brooklyn Bridge and its significance to the technological development of the nation; learn about the history, location, structure, and style of other bridges.

Group activities—In assigned groups of four, build a bridge using only popsicle sticks and glue; its span must be 41 cm, it must weigh less than 200 grams, be at least the width of four sticks and hold as much weight as possible. (The strongest bridge one year held over 126 pounds.)

As a career connection, the 120 students on the team talk to a local painter who did many of the murals under San Diego's Coronado Bridge, as well as local engineers who are specialists in bridge building. They view Ken Burns' documentary "Brooklyn Bridge," then sketch or describe one of 10 different types of bridges, integrating art with their reports. For a field trip, the students take a harbor excursion under the Coronado Bridge and a bus to the murals at the bridge. (Then they have a picnic.) Working in pairs, the students build a bridge on the computer. Sometimes playing in the background is a Peggy Seeger song, "I'm Going to be an Engineer."

The Bridges unit illustrates the 10 components Orion's teachers weave into all their units. First, they make sure students understand the purpose and objectives of the unit. Then, the tasks connect math, English, science, and history; include some group activities; provide career components; use film, field trips, music, poetry, and art; integrate a novel into the curriculum; conduct an activity with computers; and use several modes to evaluate students' work.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"There is not a teacher here who would ever say to a child, 'You can't do it' or communicate that in any way."

WESTERN MIDDLE SCHOOL: GOOD IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH

Faculty retreats are common vision-building strategies, but the agenda for a day-and-a-half meeting for Western Middle School teachers and parents illustrates the intellectual depth that they can now explore together. Rather than talk about housekeeping matters or curriculum planning, they focused on the ideas in the book *Making Connections: Teaching and the Human Brain*, not exactly a snap assignment for the retreat.

In asking teachers and parents to discuss the book, Principal Mary Grace Jaeger was laying the groundwork for the next school year's emphasis on professional development—understanding and carrying out interdisciplinary learning. Selected by the teachers in 1993 as Western's new principal, Jaeger had taught at Western 10 years earlier. At that time, "we had changed to a middle school, but our classes were tracked," she says. "We were not sophisticated enough to know about such things as learning styles or multiple intelligences, and both students and teachers were separated into those who were going somewhere and those who weren't."

Western was in the fourth year of the Clark initiative when Jaeger returned. It was a different school from the one she left a decade before. "There was an atmosphere for risk taking, for wanting to be successful at heterogeneous grouping," she says. Furthermore, teachers who had been isolated in categorical programs were now collaborating with each other. The upshot was that "there is not a teacher here who would ever say to a child, 'You can't do it' or communicate that in any way," says Jaeger.

The synergy that produced a changed faculty at Western combined the message of the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 with the support given by the Clark initiative. The former said, in essence, that every teacher can teach at a high level, "if one accepts the premise that every student can learn at a high level," according to Jaeger. Clark then provided opportunities for teachers to learn what they could do through professional development, time to conduct research, and help from a widening network of teachers in schools like theirs.

The single most important impact of all these opportunities became the chance to try out new ideas in classrooms—and see them work. Western adopted the Algebra Project, for example, one of the curriculum resources made available to Western through the Clark grant. The project prepares low-income students to move from basic arithmetic to the more abstract language of algebra, starting in the sixth grade and using real-life situations like public transportation to illustrate math concepts. "One of the strategies we have focused on is to present high content in a variety of ways," says math teacher Tommy Brown. "The Algebra Project allowed me to cover such concepts as substitution and positive and negative numbers in a way that it was easy for the students to understand and to cover them in a shorter period of time." Western's students, adds Jaeger, became comfortable with demonstrating math under-

standing in graphic form and in using manipulatives every day.

It was the Algebra Project and a variety of other methods, according to Brown, that helped Western's math scores increase each year, moving the school from bottom on the Kentucky assessments in the district's middle schools (24th) to 15th in three years.

The plus of being a Clark school, Brown adds, is the emergence of a can-do attitude by faculty and students because "someone believes in you."

MUIRLANDS: WHERE TEACHERS BELIEVED ALL STUDENTS WERE ABOVE AVERAGE

At Muirlands Middle School, across town from Mann Middle School in San Diego, teachers took on one of the most formidable challenges—convincing affluent, well-educated parents that detracking classes is good for all students. This is a school where the well-to-do La Jolla neighborhood families possess a strong Lake Wobegon attitude, and, indeed, most of their children qualify for GATE, the gifted and talented education programs. However, almost none of the one-third of the barrio students bused in from across town ever made it into a GATE class.

Muirlands' teachers believed this was wrong. And because it would have been impossible politically to detrack by creating regular classes, they decided to fit the curriculum to each student's needs while moving the barrio students into GATE classes. Slowly, one subject and one grade at a time, the teachers built a school where the same high-content curriculum and instruction is now given to all students. The only separate classes remaining are small groups of very high-IQ students and of students with very limited English skills. But standards are just as high for the latter group (see page 61).

Detracking math became the most difficult barrier because of math's importance to neighborhood families who anticipate their children will try for highly competitive colleges and universities. Math was the last subject in which students were grouped heterogeneously, a move that required tremendous persistence by the teachers and that was constantly evaluated by them.

Realizing some parents of entering students presented the most difficult problem, Principal Cassandra Countryman began to meet with parents individually and urge them to talk to the Muirlands teachers. She knew teachers' understanding of an individualized curriculum and enthusiasm for untracking were the most persuasive tools she had. Moreover, one teacher volunteered to take on an after-school math enrichment program for a small group of high-ability students.

The teachers also relied on a "visual aid." Muirlands' teachers are among the most sophisticated users of student portfolios for assessment in the district because of their participation in a national portfolio demonstration project funded by the Rockefeller Foundation (Performance Assessments Collaboration in Education). Portfolio assessments are much more than collections of student papers; they are deliber-

ately structured to show student growth and involve students in evaluating their own work according to certain criteria.

The Muirlands math portfolios disarmed the most reluctant parents. Presented with the portfolios, which were often explained by their children, parents were asked by the teachers: "Do you believe this is a challenging math assignment? Do you see the growth in understanding and achievement of your child?" The overall message, says Countryman, "was that there is no way you can say this is not good for even the brightest students."

The teachers were successful at detracking because of their professionalism. But what does that really mean? Muirlands' "portrait" of student development in English/language arts, three years in the making, answers that question well.

The document, says sixth grade language arts teacher Carol Barry, represents the cumulative results of five years of reform efforts under the Clark initiative. Becoming a middle school on the eve of the project, the school was open to new ideas. Teachers researched middle school issues, endlessly debated content standards, wrote their own assessment tools, and developed a school-wide portfolio system. They became known for their risks and their standards, speaking and presenting at conferences and writing articles about their experiences.

Taking all they had learned over several years—about content, student learning, and their own abilities to work together—they began to discuss curriculum standards across grades. "Our individual interdisciplinary units were very successful," says Barry, "but we found that we were each working in isolation as part of grade-level teams. We also recognized that it was vitally important for students engaged in interdisciplinary study to be exposed to a range of genres in reading and writing."

So the teachers drew up a portrait of student achievement by grade level. The portrait includes grade level themes reflecting units covered in social studies, and it identifies eight styles of writing.

The teachers took advantage of various staff development experiences and the opportunity to connect with national efforts to set standards. "We've progressed to a point where we, as a staff, feel that we can effect change," Barry says. "We know what a strong program should look like." The portrait, she adds, reflects the conviction of the teachers that a challenging interdisciplinary program can coexist and thrive with an accelerated academic curriculum. This is how Muirlands' language arts teachers envision what students should know and be able to do:

A PORTRAIT OF STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

1. The language arts program is literature-based and meaning-centered. It exposes all students to significant literary works. Our literature program at grades 6, 7, and 8 parallels and reflects the thematic units studied in corresponding social studies classes. The year-long theme for grade 6 is

Muirlands' social studies teacher Tony Young, center, challenges students to understand Mayan civilization.

Presented with the portfolios, parents were asked by the teachers: "Do you believe this is a challenging math assignment? Do you see the growth in understanding and achievement of your child?"

"Survival." For grade 7 it is "Change," and for grade 8 it is "Who Are We Americans." Students read and respond to both self-selected and teacher-selected works. They study a variety of literary genres including all types of primary-source documents. At each grade level they study the elements of literature and the elements of style. (Grade 6 novels/novellas might include *Marco of the Winter Caves, Walkabout, Pyramids, The House of Dies Drear, The Jataka Tales, Trojan War*, or *The Giver.* The grade 7 list includes *The Bronze Bow, King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, Samurai's Tale, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Hamlet,* and *A Tale of Two Cities.* At grade 8, the list includes *The Crucible, When the Legend Dies, The Fall of the House of Usher, Across Five Aprils,* and *To Kill a Mockingbird.*)

2. The program includes writing to construct and clarify meaning and directs attention to the various stages of the writing process. Students practice a variety of creative and expository writing. Writing is literature-based and process-oriented. Students use writing to extend and reformulate their knowledge, synthesizing new products based on literature. The stages of the writing process are emphasized at all three grade levels. Students write frequently. In pre-writing and during the editing process, students work with rubrics/scoring guides. They talk to each other about their work, act as peer editors, and collaborate on certain pieces. They produce final drafts in which meaning is clear and the conventions of language are used appropriately. The eight CLAS (California Learning Assessment System) writing formats are taught at all three grade levels, with special emphasis on the following at each grade level:

Sixth—autobiographical incident, first hand biography, evaluation, and short story;

Seventh—autobiographical incident, evaluation, short story, and observation;

Eighth—problem-solution, observation, report of information, and analysis (with speculation about cause or effect).

Students at all three grade levels study grammar and language usage. This study is continually reinforced through the peer editing process, emphasizing the practical application of their studies. At the sixth grade level, teachers evaluate grammar usage through students' own writing and provide suitable remediation throughout the year. This is supplemented with specific grammar units that parallel student needs. Emphasis is placed on parts of speech, language mechanics, and punctuation. At the seventh grade level, emphasis is placed on sentence structure, language mechanics, and syntax. Students study parts of speech in depth, providing a solid foundation for more in-depth study at the eighth grade level. At the eighth grade, students build

64

65

upon the basics. They review parts of speech, language mechanics, subject-predicate; and study subject complements, pronouns, prepositional phrases, and simple, compound, and complex sentences. Students at the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade levels systematically study vocabulary. Some vocabulary is literature-based and some is based on the different levels of the text *Wordly Wise*. Appropriate use of the dictionary is taught at the 6th grade level.

3. The program includes attention to oral language development and proficiency. Students communicate for a variety of purposes in creative and innovative ways at each grade level. Their reading, writing, and oral communication skills are integrated to help students construct meaning. Scoring guides for oral presentations are used across grade levels throughout the year. Students reflect upon and assess their own performance and the performance of others. Students talk about works they have read; all are given opportunities to participate.

4. The program includes an assessment component that encompasses the full range of language arts goals and incorporates performance-based approaches to assessment. Students at each grade level regularly work in cooperative groups to discuss and respond to works of literature or to do background research on related topics. These tasks allow for experiences in other content areas such as art, music, science, and history, both through individual work and collaboration. Students produce both short and long-term performance tasks, many of which are presented to real audiences. Students at each grade level, and in various scholastic disciplines, maintain working folders from which they generate individual school-wide portfolios.... Each student portfolio will contain student-selected work reflecting each of the following dimensions of learning: effective communication, analytical and critical thinking, global perspective and social responsibility, creativity, citizenship, inquiry and problem solving, and growth and learning. The school-wide portfolio will follow the students from grade 6 to 7 and from grade 7 to 8. This will provide the opportunity for students to review work completed in the previous year and design goals and objectives for the learning year to come. In addition, students can reflect upon their own growth in their school career. This portfolio culture will produce students who are actively involved in their learning.

The next goals of teachers at Muirlands, according to Barry, are to develop three-year plans in all academic areas and to continue discussions about school-wide standards in each area of the curriculum. Ultimately, she says, the teachers want to develop benchmarks with which to assess student achievement. "Our experience and training," she adds, "make us eager" to keep pushing the standards higher.

Chapter 2

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONALS

Urban districts, benignly or directly, tend to rely more on their own policies and resources for staff development, less on higher education institutions or, as in rural districts, on intermediate educational units. They drop into this folder everything from staff development days with no guidance or resources to courses required of all teachers. The instructors for professional development may be teachers themselves, outside consultants, or university faculty.

Few districts have revised their staff development activities to be less like a mishmash and more like purposeful professionalism guided by a coherent vision of what students should know and be able to do. Some examples of the latter occurred in the Clark districts, where the most successful schools learned to shape on their own what was best for them and for their teachers.

Professional development that makes a difference in the classroom is consistent, ongoing, stretching, and inclusive. That is, teachers plan and conduct it as essential to their goals for academic performance in their school.

Like in most schools, professional development at San Diego's Mann Middle School usually consisted of a one-shot deal, led by a visiting expert (who never showed up again) invited in by the administration. Teachers later might try what the expert had recommended, but they had no feedback and no support.

That was before Beverly Bimes-Michalak.

A consultant for the Clark initiative, she had developed the program Writing to Learn under the auspices of the Council for Basic Education. It essentially is a professional development process that integrates writing into all aspects of the curriculum. It is more than a single project, however, because Bimes-Michalak makes teachers take charge of the process and inspires them to be continuous learners. They learn to analyze and evaluate, modify, retry, and help each other. At the beginning of the process, she is on campus frequently and available for personal feedback through phone, fax and E-mail. Gradually, teachers learn to

Writing to Learn combines hands-on professional development for teachers with hands-on writing experience for students. Writing throughout the day is a major component of this Louisville student's work.

At Mann Middle School, math teachers asked for professional help on writing techniques for their classes; the science department now works with journals and logs to incorporate writing into its curriculum.

teach their colleagues to use Writing to Learn.

Part of the success of Writing to Learn undoubtedly is due to the environment of at-ease sociability it creates, one in which teachers can be openly reflective with each other. At Mann, the professional development process did not stop there, however.

Writing across the curriculum had been a concern at the school for some time, and teachers had experimented with using writing in subjects other than language arts as a preparation for the state's standardized tests. Still, the effort had been initiated by the principal and was seen by teachers as an add-on, not as integral to the curriculum.

Writing to Learn began to change this view. As described by the principal, Julie Elliott, it is a professional practices approach, not a "sage-on-the-stage" model. Teachers found it exciting, learned how to share their frustrations and questions, and accepted Bimes-Michalak as a critical friend.

Elliott also saw an evolution take place. "Teachers came to see that this was the beginning of a change process that would affect everything they did in the classroom," she explains.

Out of this professional development came a desire to begin school-wide portfolios, and a group of teachers began working with feeder elementary schools to create a portfolio culture among the schools in their cluster. Math teachers asked for professional help on writing techniques for their classes; the science department now works with journals and logs to incorporate writing into its curriculum.

Elliott explains that the school's Staff Development Committee now plans all activities with continuity and long-range changes in mind, a result of the Writing to Learn experience. And Mann is working on a three-year plan for continuing professional development of all kinds, not just Writing to Learn.

Moreover, some of the major elements of Writing to Learn–reflection, peer collaboration, portfolios, and writing–are part of the learning process for staff as well as students. They are applied in the school's teacher evaluation process and its governance plan. In other words, says Elliott, Writing to Learn changed how teachers design and use professional development and how teachers' development ties into the school's goals.

IROQUOIS TEACHERS CREATE 'HIGHER EDUCATION' FOR LOW-PERFORMING STUDENTS

Blazer University is a brainchild of teachers at Iroquois Middle School in Louisville. They designed it to be exclusive (by invitation only), offer a broad range of "liberal arts" courses, and to "sneak up" on the enrolled students, promoting the idea that learning can be fun. Blazer U., named after the school's mascot, also is how the teachers at Iroquois responded to the state's concern that the Kentucky reform plan for an extended school day at low-performing schools was becoming too remedial across the state. Iroquois also needed a way of reaching students in academic trouble; its 1993 state assessment results warranted

designation as a school requiring intervention (its scores improved the next year, and it came off the list).

The enrollees at Blazer U. meet after school two days a week, usually taking two courses at a time. These could be electives like the literary magazine, laser disc science, math in art, Writing for Hollywood (combining drama and writing), Cartoon Capers, or the Chess and Checker Club. All students rotate through four other courses during the Blazer U. school year—A Taste of Technology, Career Opportunities, Your Best Image, and Team Building. The 150 students, sent special invitations to their homes to apply, stand in line to register; courses sometimes are closed, as in college.

"The kids don't even know it is ESS anymore," says Cheryl DeMarsh, former Iroquois principal, referring to the state's program of extended school services meant to be targeted at the most at-risk students. And teachers are proud that "we really did this on our own," according to math teacher Cheryl Rigsby. DeMarsh basically credits the professional development fostered by the Clark initiative for Blazer U.'s unique approach—"allowing teachers to learn from each other, to dream, to take the initiative and go with it."

Adult perceptions were singled out as the most critical component leading to student success at Iroquois. DeMarsh recalls of the staff's initial attempts to provide a focus for professional development. This understanding led the teachers to step back from activities and spend time learning about adolescent development and learning traits. They tried out strategies especially successful with adolescents, such as cooperative learning and cooperative discipline, Socratic seminars, and experiential learning.

Complementing this expansion of teacher knowledge were instructional and curriculum-based programs, such as Writing to Learn, Foxfire, and Integrated Language Arts (a curriculum prepared for the Louisville schools by Bimes-Michalak). Not only did these experiences prepare teachers for the Kentucky reforms and assessments, but they also fostered the growth of leadership. According to DeMarsh, the number of teacher-leaders expanded from just a few to a group large enough to cover a new team structure, departments, a strong instructional focus, and involvement with extra-curricular/co-curricular activities. The benefits of such professional development, says DeMarsh, "have been rich."

These principals and teachers are among the first to say the transformation of their schools and staffs has only begun. Their successes do not imply all is perfect in classroom instruction, although much more excellent teaching is taking place than a few years earlier. Indeed, in a report based on classroom observations in Louisville, evaluators for the Clark Foundation[2] noted that "it is neither easy nor intuitive for most teachers" to carry out exemplary practices. Typically, teachers face challenges they do not know how to address, such as greater content depth, the convergence of new assessments with their traditional way of doing things, or attempts at new pedagogy with which they are not familiar. Rather than risk showing

what they don't know in classes, many of them resort to what they know best—teaching as they always have done it.

As touted as Writing to Learn is, even it depends on teachers' willingness and skill at pressing deeper into content issues and the ability to use student work as the measure of their own (the teachers') success.

Working in one of the most demoralized schools in the Clark network, Frick Junior High in Oakland, Assistant Dean Rachel Bartlett Preston says something more powerful than a money incentive, as in Kentucky, is needed to induce teachers to change practice and beliefs. "When they commit to something, they must have an outcome," she says, "some powerful outcome that would make those sitting on the fence get off of it and those who want to effect change get something immediate to hold on to."

Older city school systems also face twin problems that require more and better professional development, not the paltry efforts seen in most of them. For one, their teaching staff is aging. In Baltimore, for example, two-thirds of the teachers have 20 or more years of experience; early retirement can be taken after 25 years. Nearing retirement, teachers may not be enthusiastic about making the effort to learn new skills. Secondly, new teachers in urban areas leave at higher rates than the national average. Again in Baltimore, half of the 31 percent of the staff who were first-year teachers, according to one study, did not return the next year. Urban districts draw from alternative routes to teaching, but as the Teach for America experience shows, the districts do little to help such teachers make a transition into classrooms. Recruiting new college graduates without education degrees, Teach for America had counted on district professional development support to help the program's eager but pedagogically deficient teachers adjust to the classroom. This didn't happen; Teach for America finally trained a cadre of professional developers itself.

In San Diego and Louisville, at least, a combination of factors such as principal and teacher leadership and the development of district skills at shaping professional development (and school accountability) gave teachers more support for change. These are move livable communities than the older cities in the network, and higher teacher morale is a factor in the professionalism shown. Yet most of the schools chosen to participate struggled with problems as severe as those in the other districts.

The quality of leadership and professional development in San Diego and Louisville evolved. Some Louisville teachers observed, for example, that in the beginning, staff development was fractured and not anchored; it became more cohesive as it was seen to support the changes under KERA. San Diego's research office shared data results with the schools, which gradually contributed to a greater focus for professional development on student achievement at both Clark schools. Staff development, in the past often willy-nilly and focused on individual teachers' interests, became a function of the schools' vision and of teachers who decided together what they needed to do.

On paper, the other sites also selected staff development as a priority. In Oakland, for example, summer institutes were developed to prepare teachers in the middle grades, and especially those in the Clark schools, to implement higher content, interdisciplinary teaching, and new pedagogies. That few teachers from the three Clark schools participated should have been a warning sign about the lack of preparatory groundwork for change in those schools.

The learning coordinator at Kosciuszko Middle School in Milwaukee, Alan Hunley, watched the influence of staff development grow at his school during the Clark years. Looking back at the five years of the grant during which the school had three principals, he notes that many of the things the teachers tried are now part of the school, not add-ons, and include advisories, peer mediation, and Writing to Learn. However, now that the foundation dollars are gone, Hunley adds, staff development is not as extensive. Also, the benefit he saw at the school did not translate into improvement on student assessments. It was more of a change process for teachers, he says.

The same effect occurred at Calverton Middle School in Baltimore, where staff development led to teachers' initiating projects such as advisories, tutorials, peer mediation, cooperative learning. Yet, when Earl Lee took over as principal during the last year of the Clark initiative, he found little evidence of the effects of staff development or teachers' connection to the initiative. "There was no structure in place to make sure teachers used new strategies and broke old habits," he says. The school was in such a slide that it was selected for "reconstitution," a state program to help the worst-performing schools.

The lack of coordination of professional development at Calverton and the other Clark school, West Baltimore, despite the added resources they received from the foundation's grants, did not escape the attention of other teachers in the district. "The central office," says a union official, "did nothing to help those schools use the resources right."

At most of the low-performing schools, there is little evidence that staff development changed attitudes or motivated teachers to stretch themselves. Principal turnover contributed to the lack of focus—19 principals over five years at schools in the three systems where systemic staff development did not occur. So did the districts' lack of leadership and support.

In Baltimore, for example, staff development has been endlessly studied by experts inside and outside of the school district, with mostly negative conclusions. It is high on every superintendent's list of priorities. The current superintendent, Walter Amprey, established a new group—the Department of Professional Development, Organizational Development and Attitudinal Reform—to create a staff development plan for teachers. However, this effort, as traced in a study conducted by the advocacy group Students First,' has started, stopped, faltered, seen its funding largely shifted to other priorities, and is still fragmented and incohesive. Calverton, thus, mirrors the lack of focus in its own district.

Staff development, in the past often willy-nilly and focused on individual teachers' interests, became a function of the schools' vision.

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Except for the usually temporary "save-this-school" principal, most inner-city principals depend upon their teachers' skills and collaboration for their reputation—and the success of their students. Good principals clear out the debris in front of teachers, know what's ahead, help map out the march, get the resources, and monitor the progress. They don't bark orders.

Successful principal leadership moves from management to empowerment of teachers, but this is a subtle challenge that requires its own set of critical skills and considerable support for the principals.

It is the lucky principal who can shape a school's staff to his or her image. Muirlands Middle School in San Diego, for example, switched from a junior high to a middle school on the eve of the beginning of the Clark grant, allowing the principal to select teachers committed to the philosophy of middle grades education. But that isn't common.

Nor are strong-willed principals like Louisville's Ron Barber in great supply. He moved from coordinator of middle schools in the central office to principal of the tired, constantly failing Western Middle School at the beginning of the Clark grant. Over his four years at Western, Barber evolved from a "bulldog" to a "puppy dog," according to one teacher, but the former behavior served him well as he tried to shape a staff into one that believed Western students could perform well.

"A lot of people had their comfort level removed," recalls Fanny Timmer, who describes herself as being a very traditional teacher for many years. "He pushed people to move out and told us we were experts in what we do," she says. While still running a "tight classroom," Timmer now uses cooperative learning and is excited about advanced technologies. She even volunteered for a computer demonstration project that requires both herself and her students to use very sophisticated skills.

Science teacher Sandy Mayer, who arrived at Western the same year as Barber, believes "it is up to a principal to spy a dedicated teacher and back him or

Effective leadership from principals guides the reform efforts for teachers and students. Mann Middle School Principal Julie Elliott relaxes with a student.

Among the Clark schools that slipped the most over five years, principal turnover was the first problem; the second was the limited skills of principals.

her up." Barber, she says, "had to start at rock bottom—a filthy building, no heat, fights every day. The teacher across the hall from me had a broom to beat kids who were fighting." That teacher is gone, along with 11 others who left after Barber's first year at the school. "If a teacher had compassion and worked for the kids, Ron found the resources," Mayer says. "But he made life difficult for those who said the kids were stupid."

Hemmed in by tenure and seniority rules, as well as by teachers turned off by constant reform mandates, Lynn Dodd at King Estates in Oakland is more typical of the urban middle school principal. She couldn't do what Barber did. Hers has been a slow, painful process of building staff cohesion. She would have preferred to declare all positions vacant when the school was selected as a district demonstration site. "If people wanted to be here, I wouldn't have to constantly worry about children getting a good education," she says with anger and determination in her voice.

However, Dodd has weathered extremely negative staff members and is building a cadre of teacher-leaders. As a demonstration site, King Estates had to select from several reform models presented by the district; it adopted the James Comer process as a model, one that creates support teams for students and empowers parents to help make decisions within schools. At first, the support team was school-wide, but teachers decided to move supportive team services into the three grade-level "houses" in order to provide more individual help to students. The school-wide support team needed modifying, teachers decided, to give the houses more personal contact with students. Now, the houses cope with most discipline problems, and the teachers in each house take more responsibility for student success, Dodd says.

These are subtle changes in a school once so warped by its problems that the needs of students had been lost. It took Dodd a long time to learn to "read my staff." She was distracted at first by the time she needed to wrest control of the school away from unruly students, but she has now reached the stage of intolerance with poor teaching that Barber felt immediately. Dodd is one of the few principals seemingly able to move from discipline issues to instructional ones, and she has done it with little help from her district.

As situations in schools change, so do the kinds of leadership they need. This means that early grooming of good candidates for principalships, careful principal selection, and structured principal support are priorities in urban districts. Among the Clark schools that slipped the most over five years, principal turnover was the first problem; the second was the limited skills of principals.

Most principals were selected for their tough discipline approaches, often necessary at seriously troubled schools. However, once a school was stabilized, a different kind of leader was needed, one who could foster critical, massive changes in curriculum and instruction, changes strong enough to negate the student anger and failure which put the school in trouble in the first place. Such leaders use everyone's skills to

improve student learning. But building collaboration usually is not a strength of authoritarian principals; instead, in the most troubled Clark schools, control would erupt as a problem again, and an even tougher–and less innovative–principal would be sent in.

Principal development–the transformational kind–apparently is an even lower district priority than quality teacher development. Other than housekeeping sessions or workshops on new programs, principals in most of the Clark sites, who were responsible for schools expected to undertake considerable change, received no additional support from their districts.

In Louisville, however, Howard Hardin, the central office coordinator of the Clark program, supported principals as much as teachers with research, data, and inclusion on planning. Barber, as a highly experienced administrator, acted as a mentor to the other Louisville principals in the Clark network when they needed help.

In San Diego, superintendent leadership and consistent district policies about principal leadership served the Clark schools well. Both Mann and Muirlands kept the same principal for four or more years of the project. Moreover, Cassandra Countryman, principal at Muirlands, credits former superintendent Thomas Payzant with deliberately placing younger and more diverse candidates for future principalships in leadership roles. "We're now coming of age," she says, prepared to lead in a school system that continues to become more diverse.

Change needs to be driven in schools with well-informed principals, says San Diego's Deputy Superintendent Frank Till; change should not be the prerogative of the central office. The district is fostering peer support through clusters–meetings of K–12 principals. Also, to broaden the development of principals, the district is working on a multi-site consortium that will provide "cutting edge mentors" for principals from around the region on a consistent basis.

WHAT PRINCIPALS WANT AND NEED

The Clark project stepped in where districts were lagging on professional development for principals, but the effort had its limits. Staff developers, led by Clark consultant Don Rollie, worked with the principals in several ways–at twice-yearly seminars away from their schools, during on-site visits to help them with such projects as using data or developing a continuum of effort within their schools, and through feedback from job shadowing of the principals.

Isolated in their own districts, the principals were tremendously grateful for the chance to get together. They could say what was on their minds away from their colleagues, share problems and ideas, and develop support for each other. "The meetings gave us the strength to face the next six months," says Sheila Kolman, principal of West Baltimore Middle School during the Clark years and now at the central office.

Back home, the Clark principals not only felt isolated but often in competition with other middle school principals, particularly those at magnet schools with

> Many teachers were reluctant to give up their traditional control. They rearranged the chairs for cooperative learning, but they didn't rearrange their attitudes.

Support for principals in San Diego is a key factor in their reform efforts. Muirlands' principal Cassandra Countryman, center, has regular opportunities to meet with her peers.

a heavy emphasis upon recruitment. In their own schools, however, principals needed to have collaborative skills. According to a study of the principal development aspect of the Clark initiative[4], the experiences and insights the principals built together through their work with Rollie "pushed them in the direction of developing a shared, collaborative culture in their schools." The Clark principals also had greater opportunities than before to attend and present at conferences. They learned to diagnose their learning styles and see how these styles fit with the needs of their schools. As Rollie explained, the principals found out that "a leadership style is just not something that sort of sits out there in a vacuum, that it is really a set of skills, a style that they apply to their own situation and to their own faculty."

Despite the help the Clark initiative gave to principals in understanding their leadership styles and identifying problem areas, it could not provide what principals needed most: that consistent tap on the shoulder, that voice asking, "Have you thought about...?" Or, "What is the research that supports your improvement plan?" Or, "Have you collected data on this change?" Only the district can provide that tap or voice from a well of resources, such as its own principal development efforts, peer coaching, consultants, and connections to research sources. The Center for Early Adolescence provided mentors at each of the five Clark sites, and some of the principals depended upon them for guidance. They were models for a few of the principals that districts ought to provide. Yet, the mentors were mostly concerned with school-wide change, not specifically with principal transformations.

Just like teachers who are sometimes overwhelmed and slide back into old ways, many of the principals found their daily, crisis-ridden existence too compelling to allow them to change their habits for very long. Skip Clemons, Jr., trying to become less of a disciplinarian and more of an instructional leader for Southern Middle School in Louisville, believed he was "spiraling up." But then, along came a bad year with an influx of behavior disorder classes, "and the spiral went down." He largely turned over instructional issues to teachers without supervision. Similarly, a principal who learned from self-analysis instruments and job shadowing that she was too authoritarian still could not delegate responsibilities beyond a few selected staff. With more than 1,400 students, control was foremost in her school's priorities. The need for control–and consequent mistrust of student empowerment through such strategies as problem solving–pervaded classrooms. This failure was starkly revealed on state assessments that emphasize critical thinking. Many teachers were reluctant to give up their traditional control. They rearranged the chairs for cooperative learning, but they didn't rearrange their attitudes.

Had the districts taken initiative and created cohorts of reform-minded principals in each city who could learn together and support each other, perhaps there would have been more stability for the schools.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Chapter 4

PARENT INVOLVEMENT: A MISNOMER FOR URBAN SCHOOLS?

Every Clark school—every inner city school, for that matter—cries out for more parent involvement. If only parents would come to the school and make the connections, then perhaps they could be persuaded to be "on the school's side" and get their children off to school on time, take an interest in homework, pressure their children to achieve, and attend school functions.

These are worthy goals and reflect an understanding that among poor families, parent involvement must be defined in nontraditional terms. The bake sales for school trips or the fund raising for computers, typical of a suburban school, do not always fit with the needs or possibilities of poor families. However, even a revised understanding of parent support from low-income families relies too much on efforts to get parents on the "school's side," not enough on what it takes to get the schools on the "parents' side."

Efforts to involve low-income parents in urban middle schools must use a language and actions that convey a commitment by the schools to support parents and a message that the schools are family-centered.

Daisy Cubias and Shirley Owens have knocked on hundreds of doors in the Milwaukee neighborhoods that send students to Kosciuszko and Parkman Middle Schools. These two energetic parent coordinators set up parent centers at each school, started classes for parents, and served as mediators between families and teachers/administrators. They named their effort the Empowerment Project, and it worked.

Before the Empowerment Project, says Cubias, "parents weren't welcome in the schools." Now, they have their own places there, use newly acquired computer skills to publish their own newsletters that talk about school issues frankly, and volunteer for tasks that the parent coordinators try to make meaningful. With local funds beyond those supplied by the Clark Foundation, the Empowerment Project has expanded to two other middle schools and to the high schools where students from the four schools usually matriculate.

Mann Middle School's Parent Center provides translators for teachers and classes for parents. Charles Truong, right, visits the school with his son.

What Kozy and Parkman accomplished was a change in parents' perceptions about the schools. Schools became more welcoming places, and thus in the minds of parents, better environments for their children.

Surveys show that parent satisfaction with the Clark network schools is up considerably. This becomes even more impressive when compared to a 1995 citywide study of black parents that found 47 percent convinced the schools in general had become worse in the past five years. Parent involvement and approval of "Kozy" and Parkman, however, weren't enough to make the differences needed. Even as parent satisfaction went up, indicators of student success at the schools went down—achievement in reading and math, as well as attendance.

How can more involved parents approve of schools that are not serving their students well? On the surface, says Owens, "parents are concerned only about their own child's progress." The numbers of parents brought into the schools through the Empowerment Project represent dramatic increases, percentage-wise, from previous years, but they still make up only a minority of parents at the two schools. Because of their involvement, their children probably are doing better in school, or the parents at least are in accord with the schools' goals. If the school-wide indicators stay the same, however, Owens predicts that a next stage may be anger.

Underneath the parent involvement issue in inner-city schools is a deep mistrust by parents that schools hardly comprehend. What Kozy and Parkman accomplished was a change in parents' perceptions about the schools. Schools became more welcoming places, and thus in the minds of parents, better environments for their children. However, as Martine Makower of the Urban Strategies Council in Oakland points out, "parent involvement is not a substitute for teachers being professional and making sure students learn." More parent involvement might minimize teacher behaviors rising from cultural misunderstandings, she says, and an informed community is better able to hold schools accountable. But, "we're all going to get stuck if there are no consequences for poor teaching."

LOUISVILLE: SCHOOLS REACH OUT

In Louisville, the excellent training and materials offered by the Effective Parenting Information for Children (EPIC) provided a base for teachers and parents on how to connect better. Yet, the number of parents drawn into the schools grew very little.

At Western Middle School, where grandparents and parents of today's students hold their own memories of hostility and failure as students at the same school, luring parents back is tough. Western began a monthly awards program, the Falcon Awards, at which students nominate their parents for the honor and read their essays aloud at luncheon ceremonies for the families. These are heart-warming experiences—tear-jerkers for many—and they increased parent involvement to some extent. But reaching parents requires more. For Principal Mary Grace Jaeger, "dealing with the love/hate relationship of parents with the school means that we have to work through what parent involvement means." Parent attitudes are more important than involvement, she admits, but the dilemma is how to change attitudes on a

scale beyond the few parents who respond to overtures by the school.

This dilemma is borne out in a survey of parents at Western and Southern Middle Schools by the countywide Coalition of Middle Schools. Parents talked about several barriers that are very real to them: "a discomfort with the confrontational setting" created by schools when communicating with parents; negative past personal experiences; an inability to do what teachers ask them to do; and a put-down attitude toward workshops, training, or other meetings between parents and school people. This mistrust makes seemingly innocent school practices take on different meaning for parents. Teachers, for example, may believe that a team conference is more helpful to parents than conferring with individual teachers, but to a parent facing a group of teachers at the same time, the experience could be formidable and more threatening.

SAN DIEGO: LEARNING TO COMMUNICATE

In San Diego, diversity is the "parent problem." Throughout the Clark project, the Home/School Partnership Collaboration, coordinated by the June Burnett Institute at San Diego State University, brought together seven agencies in San Diego to create a multi-ethnic effort to increase parent involvement. It included the traditional parent groups (PTA, Junior League, Parent Institute), but also reached out to Chicano, Asian, and African-American groups.

The Partnership succeeded in putting diverse groups in the same room together for the first time. It sponsored parent training at different levels. When barrio parents at Muirlands Middle School protested what they perceived as discriminatory practices/attitudes by Muirlands teachers, the Partnership helped work out a compromise that extended barrio parent involvement and barrio student participation in school affairs. At Mann Middle School, the various parent groups work through a Parent Center that provides interpreters for teachers, classes for parents, and volunteer coordination.

Over the years, the Partnership's strategies to handle diversity changed. Originally, its institutes for parents were separated by language/ethnic group, with parents coming together only for plenary sessions. However, commonalities became more important than differences. All parents now meet together, discussing the same issues with the help of translators. At one meeting, for example, the film "Victor," about an immigrant boy caught between the culture of his family and that of his American school, resonated among all of the parents, helping them to feel a kinship with each other. "Parents from very different backgrounds find they share the same problems," says Jean Taylor, the PTA representative on the Partnership.

While the Partnership has brought together cross-cultural leadership among various groups and increased the number of parents coming into the schools, the percentages of increased involvement are still not large. Nor is Taylor, who is white, convinced that many teachers' attitudes are changing toward cul-

At one meeting, the film "Victor," about an immigrant boy caught between the culture of his family and that of his American school, resonated among all of the parents.

Parent-teacher night at Iroquois brought Ed Risinger to school with his daughter.

turally diverse families. However, incidences of the lack of understanding are more likely to be with individual teachers, not a whole school, says Tomi Onibuwe-Johnson, project coordinator; and parents know the Partnership will step in and help.

BALTIMORE: PARENTS GET HOMEWORK

In Baltimore, the Fund for Educational Excellence sponsored the Teachers Involving Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) project, funded by the Clark Foundation. Using research consultants from The Johns Hopkins University and working with teams of teachers, the project developed more than 200 homework activities in language arts, science/health, and math. The assignments are for parents (or some other adult at home) and students to do together. Widely publicized at meetings and other parent contacts, the project undoubtedly increased parent knowledge of schoolwork and stimulated teachers to think of academic content from the parents' viewpoint. Anecdotal evidence says that student behavior improved at both Baltimore schools. Students return TIPS more often than regular homework assignments.

Still, the impact of TIPS on student achievement appears negligible. Overall student achievement at the schools remained among the worst performing in Maryland, according to state assessments. Nor did the program significantly increase parent involvement at either of the Clark schools in Baltimore.

106

101

LANGUAGE AND SERVICE

Looking through the parent involvement policies and summaries presented by the different Clark sites, one gets the impression that at least in the language used, the schools still perceive themselves as the leader, parents as the follower. Despite rhetoric about forming partnerships with parents, schools do not seem to have gone the extra step to become family-centered. For example, the Committee for Parent Empowerment of the Coalition on Middle Schools in Louisville wants parents to be advocates for their children, and parents and schools to develop mutual respect. Yet, the wording of the goal was less inviting: "All parents have the responsibility to be involved at high levels to enhance their children's opportunities for academic success." A parent might read that as an ultimatum, not an invitation.

Being sensitive to the power images conveyed by language doesn't mean ignoring the responsibilities of parents. Schools should expect parents to expect a level of effort and stick-to-itness, as well as civility, of their children. Poor parents should "own" the determination that their their children prepare for higher education as much as do more affluent parents. Yet, much as young adolescents need security and self-confidence in order to cope successfully, so do many families if they are to function in a supportive way.

Public policy and some middle school initiatives now recognize that need. The Youth Service Centers (YSC) at all three Louisville schools, one of the benefits of the Kentucky reform law, are providing many supports for students and families that schools had been unable to address before or had met inadequately. They are a refuge and helper, says Western's principal, Mary Grace Jaeger, and do a lot of outreach that the school wasn't doing before. "Without their help in deaccelerating parent anger," says Jaeger, "this school might be out of control."

At Iroquois Middle School in Louisville, the Youth Service Center and many of the support services of the schools have merged. Staffs from both the school and the YSC work together now on such activities as job shadowing, business-sponsored lunches for outstanding students, college visits, and self-esteem classes for students. The center provides "consistent support," says former principal Cheryl DeMarsh, especially for students and families with serious needs.

At Calverton Middle School in Baltimore, former principal Earl Lee wished fervently for such a support system for his students and their families, especially health services. As a neighborhood school, Calverton could provide a service center much more easily than schools where much of the enrollment is bused in.

In San Diego, Mann Middle School, with students from a wide geographic area, is part of the "Crawford Cluster," composed of all the schools that feed into Crawford High School. Through the Crawford Community Connection, families of students receive health and human services support. As a demonstration site in Oakland, King Estates Junior High School chose from several models to use the Comer model of developing a team approach to student support and includ-

Much as young adolescents need security and self-confidence in order to cope successfully, so do many families if they are to function in a supportive way.

Charrell Turner, center, works at Parkman through the Empowerment Program. Here she looks over her own sons' homework.

ing parents on the team. It also helped set up a Kids House in a nearby family's home, a place where a few students can go for homecooked meals, homework help from college students, and an opportunity to talk about whatever is on their minds.

Roosevelt Junior High School in Oakland expanded its counseling services in order to provide individual and group counseling to both students and parents. A Student Consultation Team meets weekly to consider individual students' problems. Also, the school offers facilities for on-site counseling provided by such groups as the East Bay Asian Youth Center and Filipinos for Affirmative Action.

This trend to offer family services within or through schools was not evident at the beginning of the Clark project. In most instances, it developed apart from the Clark efforts, but totally consonant with the initiative's emphasis upon high support. Furthermore, Baltimore's TIPS program and some of Louisville's youth service activities make the connection between higher student achievement and increased communications and/or services for families.

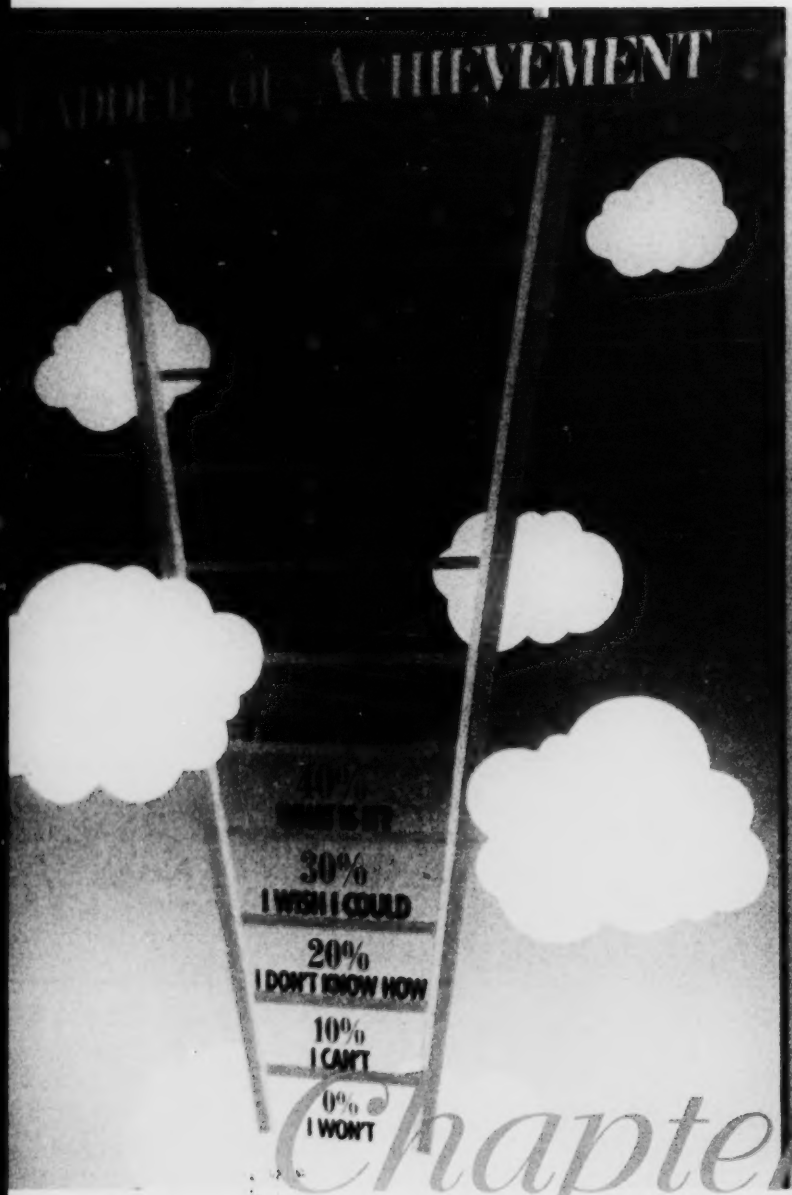
There are good reasons to make that connection more obvious. For one, research on resilient students—those who persevere in school despite terrible odds—finds that such students have a consistent support sys-

tem, an adult in or out of the family upon whom they can depend. There also is considerable evidence that *family literacy*, especially quality verbal interaction of mothers with their children, counts more toward student achievement than any other factor. Schools that help parents make connections, maneuver systems, and learn new skills are, in effect, helping their students also.

Despite many efforts to reach parents, none of the original Clark schools has been able to become a truly family-centered school, one in which parents are as much a part of the school's mission as are students. (This kind of environment, researchers point out, is a "given" for schools in Finland, for example, which ranks at the top of studies on language development of children.) That it is possible to create such schools in this country is illustrated by Washington Middle School in Long Beach. Washington invited in, on campus, a city-sponsored parent center, a Head Start program, and a police neighborhood center. It helped establish a community center across the street from the school where students and adults receive a variety of services and which is credited with revitalizing what had been considered the most troubled neighborhood in Long Beach. Counselors at Washington have been relieved of most paperwork, using college interns for routine tasks; instead, the counselors focus on direct services to students and parents. Parents still do not come out to meetings like the school wants, according to the principal, but they are in the school constantly for different reasons and the school is earning a reputation as a place that cares about families.

It will take a long time for many of the schools in the initial Clark network to create that sort of an environment for their families. However, there are hints among the schools in these blighted neighborhoods that they realize it is right for them to see parents as more than adjuncts to their goals. Instead of trying to get parents on their side, they are beginning to line up on the parents' side.

Despite many efforts to reach parents, none of the original Clark schools has been able to become a truly family-centered school, one in which parents are as much a part of the school's mission as are students.



Chapter

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

STUDENTS, REFORMS, AND THE BOTTOM LINE—ACHIEVEMENT

Change for change's sake may have been an early result of the Clark initiative, but the schools and districts that moved ahead soon realized they needed purpose. That purpose was much higher student achievement. While specific academic goals were not spelled out in the Clark Foundation's request for proposals—partly because the foundation recognized the limits of standardized test results—the implied focus was higher student achievement. The bottom line may have been too implied, but being prepared for challenging work in high school means students leave the middle grades with solid skills, including critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. It means they have goals for themselves and understand what is required of them if they want to keep their options open.

The more successful schools and districts in the Clark network also accepted a challenge unique to those who teach young adolescents in distressed urban areas—that their students' deeply personal and developmental needs and their academic growth are equally important. Nurturing is essential. But so are high academic expectations.

Schools that know how to put standards and substance into the phrase "student-centered" also are more likely to produce higher student achievement.

Skip Clemons, Jr., fingers the note from one of his teachers, quiet and reflective for a moment amidst the bustle of a hallway at Southern Middle School in Louisville. The note simply says: "*God, the Universe and a Hot Fudge Sundae* was the last book she checked out of the library. It sounds so much like a book a young girl would enjoy."

The week before, the youngster who took home a fun book for weekend reading had been a sixth grader at Southern; now it was a few days after her funeral. She was murdered by the older brother of her best friend, another Southern student. Although this violence occurred away from school, it violated the sanctity of a school that had worked hard to be a safe, secure place for its students. Teachers were hovering together, not sure what to anticipate on the first day that the murderer's sister returned, ready t- mediate, console, protect students from each other's

A Writing to Learn class at Southern Middle School puts the emphasis on achievement.

111

116

Having a safe place to learn is first among the needs of urban middle grades youngsters.

anger. A grief response team set up counseling. Teachers encouraged students to write about their feelings, but the tension still was strong because violence *invaded* the special space teachers had created around their students.

Southern probably will recover as time goes by. However, there are other schools in the Clark network that cannot assure their students they are places of safety and security. In psychologist Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of basic human needs necessary for healthy development, a sense of safety and structure ranks first among seven. Having a safe place to learn is first among the needs of urban middle grades youngsters.

At Calverton Middle School in Baltimore, where a classroom was a scene of the murder of a member of the support staff and where students are afraid to walk to or from school, educators do not give students that sense of security. Nor can Frick Junior High School in Oakland, where a student died on campus. Nor can Parkman Middle School in Milwaukee, whose students fear the long walk from home to school. Across town at Kozy, students enter and leave through the back doors because it is easier to monitor for gangs there than at the front of the building.

It is more than coincidence that the schools that achieved the least–or lost ground–during the Clark initiative also are the schools where students do not have reason to feel safe. And where the communities around the schools are not safe, either.

TRUSTING STUDENTS TO DO WELL

Another factor distinguishing student-centered schools from others was the degree to which student empowerment became a priority. Student-centered schools are not afraid of it.

Peer mediation, for example, was a popular activity at many of the Clark schools. Yet those that recognized its ability to develop student leadership took the idea far beyond a focus on dealing only with problems between students.

Mann Middle School in San Diego adapted the national Peer Helper model to its needs, selecting a large group of seventh graders to be Natural Helpers, or apprentices for peer mediation. They learn how to work together on teams, to access community resources, and "to help their friends avoid problems," says Barbara Frischman, one of the teacher sponsors.

During the seventh grade, the students build self-esteem and trust with each other. About one-third are chosen to be Peer Active Listeners (PALS) in the eighth grade, a selection that depends more on a student's citizenship skills than grades. The PALS conduct peer mediation–and much more. They write a "Dear Pals" column for the school newsletter to answer student questions; they tutor, conduct orientations for new students, adopt lunchtime buddies who are new to the school, and help run the school's open house. They also organize support groups for their peers. "The kids in this school need groups for every reason imaginable," says Frischman, noting that older students can be trained to facilitate them. Peer mediation definitely

112 113

works, she adds. Of 69 mediations the PALS group conducted in 1994–95, only two failed to keep the participants from fighting.

Giving young students responsibility, such as they have in PALS, helps them take a positive approach to school. Another scenario, one that was related during a focus group of students in Oakland, could have been a total indictment of the years the students spent at the Clark schools in that city. With one important exception.

Drawn from King Estates, Frick, and Roosevelt Junior High Schools, the students, now in high school, remembered the violence. "Some mornings I just couldn't face it," said one young girl. Another recalled that the graffiti by the cafeteria had to be painted over a half-dozen times every year. The algebra books were old, and there were never enough to go around. Students would enter the seventh grade with hopes—the honor roll would be full—but by ninth grade few students were trying, said a former Frick student. Most believed that the teachers did not care about them.

Two young girls, however, both former students at Roosevelt, frowned at the comments, uncomfortable with what their peers were saying. Their experiences had been different, they said, and even though both had experienced prejudiced remarks by teachers, they felt good about their years at Roosevelt. Naresh Duggal, from India, entered seventh grade speaking no English. Ngoc Ta's family is from Vietnam; her English skills were not much better. However, through the East Bay Asian Youth Center the two girls became involved with the Middle Grades Reform Advocacy Project sponsored by the Urban Strategies Council. They started a recycling program at Roosevelt, felt bold enough to tell school administrators of the need for translators in the office and at parent meetings, and pushed fellow students to get involved.

Most importantly, these two students joined about 200 others from around the district to develop a youth agenda for the district's new middle grades reform plan. The students interviewed peers at four schools (including Roosevelt and King Estates), asking what changes they would like to see, what school qualities would be important in choosing a school, and what they wanted to know and be able to do as they headed for high school.

Given the chance to define a school, the students would have made Maslow nod in approval. Three characteristics at the top of the list that would draw them to a school were given equal weight: expected to learn, a safe campus, and the chance to explore careers. Students graded their own schools with a D-plus on the subject of healthy relationships with teachers or other students. Overall, Oakland's middle schools received a C. Students said they wanted to be challenged academically and to be asked to take more responsibility.

At a youth symposium, for example, the students debated how to make schools better. Roosevelt students decided they wanted to sponsor a school

Students said they wanted to be challenged academically and to be asked to take more responsibility.

Roosevelt students decided they wanted to sponsor a school improvement assembly where the audience would be teachers and the presenters would be students.

improvement assembly where the audience would be teachers and the presenters would be students, a brainstorming idea that never happened but might have been challenging for both teachers and students.

TAKING CHARGE OF LEARNING

These examples of student empowerment fulfill some dimensions of growing up. Truly student-centered schools, however, push the boundaries farther, giving students control over their learning. Certainly, many of the programs integrated into school-wide visions allowed students to become active learners–Socratic Seminars, the Algebra Project and Foxfire's oral history projects, Children's Express, Higher Order Thinking Skills, the technology project at Western in which students help shape each other's knowledge base, and portfolios, to mention only a few. But one doesn't need a program to encourage students to be responsible for learning.

In Sandy Mayer's science classroom at Western Middle School, a visitor might be inclined to keep his or her feet off the floor lest one of the snakes tended by the students decides to roam away from its corner. Students also build and maintain bird houses hung outside the classroom across the wide expanse of windows, keeping logs on the birds that come. They construct a rainforest in the classroom from ceiling to floor, even adding a waterfall for effect (they also collected money to buy a piece of a Brazilian rainforest).

Living in the port section of Louisville, the students have studied the ecology and history of the Ohio River and researched the effect of pollution, learning that most of the oil spills come from pleasure boats. The students decided to prepare a pamphlet on the river's importance and sources of pollution, distributing it to hotels and other businesses in the area. Mayer cannot accommodate all of the students who want to join Western's Environment Club, an after-school activity that has changed the design of Louisville's waterfront. The students testified before the city's aldermen about what they thought was wrong with the proposed plan for a waterfront park, presenting computerized drawings of how it should be redesigned. Not only were some of their ideas accepted, but the students also took charge of two flower beds in the park as their responsibility.

"I am astounded at the divergent thinking skills of these kids," says Mayer. "They are always trying to outsmart me, and I think it is great when they do that." Her way of channeling student behavior is to outsmart them back–"love for kids doesn't go very far here, they don't trust love." But they respect standing ground "in a way that does not degrade them and teaches them self-control." (Mayer followed a teacher whom the students, literally, had thrown out the window.)

Mayer's teaching draws students into content and allows them to grab hold of the learning experiences. A unit on tracking animals, for example, included five trips to the woods to look for different turds and tracks, with every student prepared to be an expert on one of the mammals inhabiting the area. In each class, a student keeps a record of participation by class members

in discussions and their preparation; the chart is posted by the door as they leave. "They are taking care of each other's learning," Mayer points out.

SHAPING PORTFOLIOS: IN WORDS AND WRITING

During the Clark initiative, portfolios became an increasingly popular tool for student control over their learning, even as the early excitement about relying on them almost exclusively for assessment cooled down. When used creatively, portfolios are much more than collections of student work. They are selected annals that students shape, reflect on, explain to parents and others, and use to understand their own progress over time. Eventually, they can become one of many assessment tools.

Helped by participating in a national demonstration of portfolios, teachers at Muirlands Middle School in San Diego were thoroughly steeped in the portfolio culture—its language, strategies, and desired results. However, sixth-grade language arts teacher Carol Barry learned over several years that students needed to use their own language to frame the portfolio experience, not "other people's yardsticks."

Barry began by asking her students to just select a few of their best pieces. The next year she used the Arts PROPEL model, asking students to select pieces for different categories, such as favorite piece or most difficult piece; students added a cover letter, telling outside readers about the portfolio. Barry was pleased with this last step, feeling students now had criteria for their portfolio selections.

However, discussions with colleagues at a Harvard University seminar on portfolio assessments the following summer convinced Barry that her students' portfolios did not "catch" what was happening in the classroom. So, she revised the portfolio system again, adapting it to an ability-based approach first used by Alverno College in Milwaukee. The next school year, students built their portfolios based on certain abilities, such as growth in learning, communication, analytical capabilities, problem-solving, or collaboration. The definitions of abilities were difficult to get over, but Barry did not want to water them down. She provided examples and asked students to write definitions in their own words. The portfolios over the year were closer to classroom experiences and much better sources of feedback for her instruction. But even then, she realized, many students still didn't "get it."

Toward the end of the school year, she asked the students to help her design a simpler system for incoming sixth graders. Six small groups of students took on the task of defining one of the abilities in kid-friendly language. She describes the process:

> **They scattered to all corners of the room, taking up residence in small clusters on the floor, assigned a scribe, and began dictating. They talked, read, reflected, reconsidered, and revised. Then they began again. They were remarkably attentive to the nuances of language. Comments flowed**

Dear Reader,

I have found that over a course of one sixth grade school year that my writing has dramatically improved. Not just my writing in general has improved, but my attitude towards has improved as well. In fifth grade, my attitude towards writing was negative; there were more important things to do than just write. Now, here I am, almost done with sixth grade, and my attitude towards writing is positive.

I always look forward to writing. Writing is the only way where I can completely express my thoughts. I think the main reason why my attitude towards writing has changed is because my sixth grade teacher, Mrs. Barry, has prepared and motivated me to become an outstanding writer. She has taught me the correct way to write.

I have spent many days perfecting my portfolio. I have included my favorite writing pieces that I have worked on over the year. I hope you will notice how my writing has improved. Enjoy looking through my portfolio.

Sincerely,
Ilana Miller

120

121

When used creatively, student portfolios are much more than collections of students' work. At Muirlands, language arts teacher Carol Barry taught students to frame and explain their work. In this portfolio cover letter, one of her students tells the reader what she has learned about writing over the course of the year.

from all corners: "You can't just say 'good.' 'Good' doesn't mean the same thing as 'interesting.'" "'Does efficient mean the same thing as 'well-written?'" "This says 'defines' but it really means 'figure out.'" When a group believed it had reworded its ability accurately, it wrote it on a transparency and shared it with the rest of the class. The larger group questioned their interpretation, made suggestions, and either registered approval, or sent the group back to work with a new set of ideas for revisions. This was critical reading, review, and reflection at its best!

When the process was complete, there were standards for the portfolios that the students owned, created by them from a shared understanding, and written in their own language. Barry did not see much difference from what she had done before, but the students did. For example, "takes effective and efficient notes" became "takes clear, well-written notes." Or, "evaluates and articulates problem-solving process" became "describes how you solve a problem." These may seem like nuances to adults, but when the students went back through their portfolios with the new language, the selection became much less abstract. Barry explains: "Their comments justifying the selection were definitions of the criteria. Now they were terrifically fluent with the system!"

The students tagged certain pieces as exemplars to go into a library that illustrates the abilities. Each year, says Barry, the classes will add to that library as resources for new sixth graders.

WHO SAYS, "I CAN'T READ?"

Another Muirlands teacher, assigned to a transitional English class for language-minority students who could not keep pace with the high content taught at the school, could have given the students what they expected—more remedial drill-and-skill work. Indeed, a class at the "bottom" in almost all urban schools would expect to be remedial, even if the results are disastrous. Of her 24 students, Mary Fipp realized from studying their records, 21 had been in the school system for six years, yet 18 percent were comprehending at only a second-grade level, none above the fourth-grade level.

Their year with Fipp was an extraordinary one, moving students from a blunt attitude of "I can't read," as one young girl blurted out defiantly at the beginning of the year, to self-confidence in English. Too often, schools segregate frequently failed students into classes that have no relationship to the mainstream curriculum—and forget about them. Fipp's challenge, as she saw it, was to offer the students a reading and writing program that mirrored the standards used in the literature/language program for the sixth-grade cluster classes. Too often, she says in an article describing her first year,[6] second-language students' interests are far ahead of the basal readers they are forced to use. She selected 10 novels for the school year with man-

ageable vocabularies but of universal interest to preteens. In each two-hour block, students discussed the vocabulary from the book, listened to Fipp read the chapter, then read the chapter themselves, writing a running commentary in a literature log. These logs, says Fipp, kept up a dialogue between the reader and characters in the book, giving students a "personal investment" in what they were reading. Students also read to each other in teams and as partners, helping one another with vocabulary and context. By doing this, says Fipp, all students gained a better understanding of the story and improved their vocabulary.

Despite initial groans from the students, writing was emphasized as much as reading. Fipp believes that writing from their own life experiences is a good way for students to begin, and she used a piece of her own writing to stimulate her students to critique and analyze. She made them comfortable with writing about themselves by sharing stories from her own life, then added time for meditation and reflection to each class (her students soon objected if this time was overlooked). Students learned to discuss each other's writing in groups and to revise often. Their portfolios began to bulge.

At the end of nine months, all of Fipp's students, so accustomed to failure, progressed. Fourteen percent gained five years in reading comprehension; 15 percent, from three to four years; 33 percent, two years; and the rest, at least one year. Fipp, who learned patience and flexibility and came to understand better the lives of her students, is now reliving this experience each year with a new class of "I can't read" students.

CENTERING ON WHAT COUNTS MOST: STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

These examples of empowering students to learn stand out among many efforts to boost student achievement at all of the Clark sites. They are inspiring examples, but ultimately the measure of a student-centered school must be students' academic growth.

Assessment policy (see page 81) is an overarching policy issue that played out differently in each of the cities. The different measures and interpretation of those measures made conclusions about student academic progress difficult. But any change effort such as the Clark initiative ultimately must ask: What changed for students, and what was the effect on their achievement?

As well as gathering anecdotal evidence and supporting ethnographic research studies, the Clark initiative funded the Education Resources Group to provide a variety of student data. ERG shaped its data gathering around the objectives of the program, such as completing the middle grades curriculum on time and improving students' attitudes toward school. It set up comparison schools matched to the Clark schools and used the following measurement tools:

- the Quality of School Life scale, administered to samples of students in the schools each spring;

FROM FIELDS OF CORN TO AMBER FIELDS OF GOLD

(An interview with my grandfather-Steve Moreno)

By Nathan Moreno Lopez

The Moreno family started in the 1880's in Guanajuato, Mexico where they were farm workers. Francisco's daughter marries Joe Baca, a soldier for the Mexican Revolutionary hero, Pancho Villa. The Mexican army forces Joe Baca and his family to leave Mexico in 1915. The rest of the family follows in a few years and the Moreno clan begins a new life the American way, in the "Land of Opportunity."

1900-1920 In Mexico

My grandfather's grandfather, Francisco Moreno, was a farmer worker in Guanajuato, Mexico where he and his wife were raising a family of six children. He was a hard-working farmer earning dinero to "bring home the frijoles, carne, and arroz." In 1915 Francisco's daughter, Luisa, married Joe Baca, a neighbor who would join Pancho Villa's army and later take his family on a journey to America. Pancho was a revolutionary leader who gained control of parts of Mexico to help the poor peasant farmers. The Mexican army believed that Pancho Villa would gain too much power, so many of Pancho Villa's soldiers were forced to go to America. Joe Baca and Luisa went to Texas.

126

127

Students select the best examples of their work for their portfolios. One of Carol Barry's students at Muirlands chose a biographical sketch of his grandfather. The story describes his family's migration to the United States, a history lesson that leads back to Pancho Villa.

Much of the reform that began with the Clark initiative produced effects that might not show up immediately in standardized tests, or even

- Self-Perception Profile for Children, an indicator of students' self-esteem and perceptions of their competence in scholastic, social, behavioral, and other areas;
- School and Career Planning Survey to find out students' awareness of school and career options;
- Cornell Critical Thinking Test;
- standardized test scores supplied by the district;
- structured interviews;
- observations/interviews within schools every other month; telephone interviews in intervening months.

Most of the ERG data cover the years 1990–93 and show mixed results on various indicators during that time period. Critical thinking skills showed a steady increase in the average percent correct over three years on the Cornell test. Student commitment to classwork was higher than the national norm during the years of the program. Students in Louisville and Milwaukee tended to have better attitudes toward teachers than the norm; Oakland and Baltimore students, worse than the norm. San Diego students' attitudes about teachers showed a small steady increase on the positive side over three years. Student self-perceptions at all sites were similar to the norm.

More eighth grade students planned for an academic or college prep program in 1993 than in 1991–31 percent, up from 21 percent. The norm nationally is 29 percent. Many more of them also were thinking about careers requiring a college degree.

Student satisfaction with school was lower than the national norm at all sites. Despite great difficulties with gathering standardized test data (see page 83), the test results led Terry Clark, president of ERG, to conclude generally that student achievement, as indicated by standardized tests, did not improve during the Clark program years. Nor did attendance figures improve, remaining lower than the district average in all but San Diego (they regressed in some schools). Terry Clark also notes that the same ups and downs and general status quo existed in the comparison schools, "so whatever was going on in the district at the time, such as changing the test, affected all schools."

However, much of the reform that began with the Clark initiative produced effects that might not show up immediately in standardized tests, or ever. The evaluators for ERG describe other indications that students had access to increasingly better teaching over the years of the Clark project:[7]

- Students' opportunities to participate in class and their actual participation increased (20 percent more in language arts, for example).
- Teachers gave substantially more feedback to students.
- The increase in time devoted to student writing and more complex writing

assignments indicated teachers' growth in understanding the usefulness of writing for development of critical thinking skills and students' capacities to do higher order tasks.

- Over three years' of observations of math classes, the number of classes demonstrating the use of high content increased from 26 percent to 47 percent.
- Teachers asked more factual questions. The range in 1990–91 of knowledge-based questions was between 50 and 64 percent; by 1992–93, it had increased to 77 to 100 percent in the classrooms observed.

In addition to the ERG data collection, the picture of student achievement can be filled in with local assessment results. They also often tell different stories from standardized tests; in some places local or state assessments corroborate the low performance documented by standardized test data.

In ***Baltimore***, for example, both Calverton and West Baltimore gradually showed some improvement on the state's functional literacy test, attributed primarily to staff development around the Student Team Writing and Student Team Reading programs conducted by The Johns Hopkins University. However, the students' scores on the performance-based Maryland School Performance Assessment System was a shocker. This assessment is interdisciplinary and emphasizes critical thinking. The state set a satisfactory score of 70; in 1994 less than 32 percent of students state-wide met that standard. The percentage of eighth-grade students who scored satisfactory at both West Baltimore and Calverton scored was in the *single digits* on the MSPAP in reading, math, social studies, science, and writing (except for a 15.4 in writing at West Baltimore). This was true even though both schools conducted a "MSPAP Blitz Week" prior to the 1994 test!

MSPAP is not the kind of test one can prep for easily in a short period of time. It requires fundamental changes in how instruction is delivered, teaching that stresses problem-solving and cooperative learning and that includes high-content instruction.

Kentucky's state-wide assessments measure how well schools move students out of the bottom level of performance–novice–and into higher categories of proficiency–apprentice, proficient, and distinguished. All three ***Louisville*** schools moved more students out of the novice level in reading. Western increased the percentage of students at the apprentice or proficient level in math from 10 to 28 and placed 4 percent in the distinguished category, where there had been none in 1992. All schools also improved on science. Iroquois, however, did not meet its overall threshold scores in 1993 and was put on the state's list of schools needing help; it was removed from the list on the basis of improvement in the 1994 scores.

The most improvement (except math at Western)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

THE WRITING SISTERS

Wide-eyed and somewhat hesitant, Kimberly Clayton edges into the principal's office at Southern Middle School, uncertain about why she had been summoned. "I wondered what I had done wrong," she said and smiled, learning that the reason was an interview. She was there to talk about what she had done right—receiving a Young Authors Award in the county competition, just as her older sister had done when she was a student at Southern.

The sisters wrote compelling accounts of family abuse for their award-winning book entries, but they are the antithesis of violent young people themselves—soft-spoken, almost shy, but anxious to talk about their classes. Katesha Murphy, Kimberly's older sister, was a serious youngster when she was interviewed two years earlier, upset about raucous public behavior by young people at a Louisville entertainment event and preaching peace and self-control. In high school, she has blossomed, joining the tennis team and becoming a majorette. Her career interest switched from teaching to law, but her love of writing continues. As a sophomore, one of her poems was accepted by the high school literary magazine, even though the entries are almost exclusively for seniors.

"Writing in all the classes at Southern really helped me in high school," says Katesha, although she still takes time to write outside of school assignments. And to help her younger sister edit her writing.

Kimberly's opportunities to write are even greater than her sister's were at Southern because the school has since adopted an integrated language arts curriculum, a two-hour block of time that adds speaking and listening to reading and writing as the core curriculum. Before she left for high school, Katesha knew that a writing rubric was a tool for evaluating writing. She could reel off definitions of proficient writing—writing that expresses a voice, is well organized, and provides sufficient details.

As Kimberly moves into the seventh and eighth grades, she also is learning how to use rubrics to evaluate her writing.

Because of their involvement with the Writing to Learn program, Kimberly's and Katesha's teachers in other subjects have learned to integrate writing into their core subject areas by renewing and awakening their own writing skills. This is one of the first steps for teachers participating in Writing to Learn. Student writing thus becomes what teachers talk about when they get together, formally and informally.

Writing is one more contribution to creating a school centered on student learning. For Katesha, who had been in other middle schools before coming to Southern, the collegiality there and the focus on student achievement felt, she says, "like a good family."

Young authors Katesha Murphy, right, and her sister Kimberly Clayton.

Schools that became student-centered—focusing every effort on improving achievement—learned that students respond to higher expectations.

occurred in writing. All Louisville schools were heavily involved in Writing to Learn and its follow-up, Integrated Language Arts, taught in a block time period and including speaking and listening.

On noncognitive measures—attendance, retentions, and dropouts—the schools improved slightly or stayed about the same.

The Wisconsin Student Assessment System results in ***Milwaukee*** were not encouraging. The school district goal (1993–94) was to be at the national norm (50). Kosciuszko Middle School student scores on reading, math, language, science, and social science averaged 27; the average at Parkman was 19. The grade seven writing sample result, for which the school district set a goal of 65 percent of students receiving a score of 4.0, plunged from 57 percent in 1992–93 to 39 for the 1993–94 school year at Kozy; at Parkman, the decrease was from 49 to 35 percent. (However, the same dramatic decline showed up citywide, dropping from 63 percent to 49 percent.)

Milwaukee also collects data by school on ninth-grade performance. The fall semester grade point averages in 1993–94 showed former Parkman students next to the bottom at 1.09 and Kozy's students sixth from the bottom at 1.39 (out of middle schools). One wonders how Parkman managed to stay off the bottom; its habitual truancy rate (students with 10 or more unexcused absences per semester) reached 60 percent in 1993–94, compared to 14 percent the year before.

Yet, a year after the Clark project in Milwaukee ended, teachers at Kozy and Parkman had really good news. Both schools participated in Writing to Learn, and although funds had run out, the teachers who took leadership through the project kept it going, sponsoring a shortened summer institute and maintaining a network of teachers around the Writing to Learn principles. The 1995 writing sample score at Kozy improved from 39 percent of students receiving a passing score to 74 percent, putting it ahead of the district norm (70) for the first time in the memory of most teachers. Parkman's scores improved as well, from 35 percent to 66 percent. Both schools moved from the bottom category—that of schools needing improvement—to the category of "improving schools."

The decreases on standardized tests in language, reading, and math scores at the three ***Oakland*** schools were as frequent as the slight increases. Those scoring above the 50th percentile on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills improved 4 percent at Frick and Roosevelt and decreased 1 percent at King Estates between 1991–92 and 1992–93 (the last year for which data were available). Yet, the scores themselves were dismal—only 22 percent of students were above the 50th percentile at Frick, 26 percent at King Estates, and 18 percent at Roosevelt.

Mann Middle School in ***San Diego*** experienced slow but steady progress in reading on the Abbreviated Stanford Achievement Test results, although its test score results are difficult to judge because most

of its enrollment–limited-English-proficient students–is not tested.

Muirlands maintained its high achievement despite detracking; few students fell below the norm (50) in language arts on the ASAT. All students were above the norm in math (its math team continued to be among the top in state competition). In addition, although the number of students was small, the percentage of Hispanic students certified for gifted and talented programs increased and was much higher than the district average.

Compared to students from the middle school that the barrio students would have attended, those at Muirlands scored slightly higher in math and 7 percentage points higher in language arts. Not so encouraging is the dropout rate of barrio Muirlands Middle School graduates who elected to attend nearby Muirlands High School. Over a four-year period–during most of the Clark initiative–40 of the 82 students left the rigorous program at the high school.

San Diego is aware of the problems in gathering reliable achievement data about its growing English as a Second Language (ESL) enrollment; in 1995 it selected an alternative assessment system to evaluate progress of ESL students.

There are no data in the Clark program to support a causal relationship between good professional development and improved student achievement. However, one can't ignore the improvement in student writing where Writing to Learn became a focus of staff development.

The full story about improved student achievement in these five districts must await greater alignment of new assessments with curriculum. Also, five years, many say, is too short a time to expect changes made by schools to produce dramatic differences in student academic progress. Nonetheless, schools that became student-centered–focusing every effort on improving achievement–learned that students respond to higher expectations of them and support for them.

Louisville teachers, for example, told Clark coordinator Howard Hardin at the beginning of the initiative that "without exception, these kids don't care. They don't value education."[8] Five years later, Fanny Timmer at Western Middle School talked about a transformation that went beyond teachers. Western moved from being a failing school to an achieving one because everyone decided to care. "It is not so important that teachers here believe students can learn at a high level," she says. "What's most important is that our students now believe that, too."

138

138

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

142

Part II

143

THE REFORM CONTEXT: PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

Most of the districts in the Clark network acted like the large bureaucracies they are. That is, they didn't show enough knowledge about the individual schools' situations to be able to relate to them in more than a perfunctory manner. Their own agendas often sent conflicting messages to schools. Their necessary attention to district-wide issues, such as budget cuts or reorganizations, often changed priorities for schools with little sensitivity to their impact.

These actions weren't intentional barriers to reforms. They reflect two seemingly countervailing behaviors endemic to large urban districts.

One is ingrained *habits* in the relationships with schools, habits that inhibit trust and innovation. In some districts, the central office kept tight-fisted control of funds under the Clark project, only gradually allowing schools to use the resources for their own priorities. The central office could not let go. In others, the opposite was just as unfruitful–an apathy toward the struggles of the schools aside from appointing committees (with endless meetings) or filing the required foundation quarterly reports. The central office had other things to do.

Some sent waves of reform plans on paper over to the schools, seldom asking more than token teacher representatives what those in the classroom thought and believed about needed changes. All of these habits displayed a lack of trust and/or respect–a real division–between central office agendas and the realities of the schools.

The other behavior that was ingrained in the districts was *instability*. The constant turnover of personnel from the superintendent down through the principalships undermined the creation and sustenance of a vision for middle grades change. Of the 12 principals in the schools at the end of the initiative, only one was in place before the project was started; the other 11 schools adjusted to 27 different principals over the five-year project. Each of the five districts had two superintendents during the project; one district got its third in 1995. Coordinators for the project changed even more often in three of the districts.

Sandy Mayer's Environment Club at Western helped change the design of the Ohio Riverfront in Louisville. Students testified at city council hearings about a plan for a waterfront park and took charge of two flower beds.

Tensions with school sites and instability of leadership are typical of school bureaucracies. The important point is how willingly school systems face the problems these create and do something about them. Over the years, the constant evaluation of the Clark program allowed a perspective to develop, one that realized districts are at different stages of being able to move from bureaucratic habits to a reform agenda. The five years of the Clark initiative also made it obvious that significant change only happens when it goes beyond a few points of light and becomes a district ethos. Again, the differences among urban districts in their ability to conduct and their commitment to systemic reform are as telling as are their common problems.

148

149

POWER PIECES

What propelled–or dragged down–these districts on middle grades reform was the context for change, which was different in each of the five sites. The context developed from local circumstances, traditions of power, politics, and leadership often disjointed from the true needs of students.

As alike as urban districts and distressed urban schools may be, it is the differences in the structures around them that determine the course of reform.

People used to be surprised at the idea and even argue against the point that public education is political. Didn't the wresting of schools by "professionals" from the ward bosses of Boston at the turn of the century set the pattern for urban school systems to be above the fray of politics?

Perhaps ward politics is gone, but not the political nature of urban school systems.

For example, the "old money" one finds in a Baltimore or a Milwaukee supports the museums, the tourist development, the do-good partnerships with schools. However, such investments come with political strings attached. Acquiescence by school leadership to community power structures means that control over school reforms often is diffused, with school boards and/or superintendents not always able to determine the direction and pace of reform.

In Baltimore, the mayor appoints the school board and thus, in reality, the superintendent. School policies often reflect another major influence in the city–a local foundation whose CEO has served on both the local and state boards of education and who has his own agenda on how to produce change in schools. The school system is vulnerable to this sort of influence because it lacks any core vision itself.

Milwaukee's business and civic communities play a large role in determining the priorities of the district. The most energetic effort of recent years is a community-funded school-to-work initiative that, in essence, represents a K–12 reform plan. Always lurking in policy talks in this city, however, is the possibility of the business community's support of wide-scale

Parent-Teacher Night at Iroquois Middle School focuses the community's attention on student achievement.

vouchers or choice plans. The groundwork for Milwaukee's current voucher plan (expanded 10-fold in 1995 by the governor and legislature to allow 15,000 students to use vouchers at private or parochial schools) was laid by a local corporate foundation. The teacher union's opposition to greater choice created dissension, a battle over control of the school board, and the eventual resignation of the reform-minded Howard Fuller as superintendent.

The consolidation in the 1970s of Louisville and surrounding Jefferson County—and their smooth transition through desegregation—is credited to the leadership of the business community. That leadership also plays a heavy role in selecting superintendents, and its early support and funding for greater technology use in the schools gave Louisville a special advantage. Still, the transition to a new superintendent—after 11 years of leadership from the same person—is turning out to be difficult for the school board and the community. Stability is never a given in urban districts.

San Diego, on the other hand, does not have a large business community to draw upon for support. Its reforms depend largely upon two types of alliances—with community agencies that serve children and families and with outside funding sources, such as foundations. However, unlike many urban districts active in developing outside resources that remain discrete projects, San Diego fits its numerous resource pieces into an overall plan framed by five "design tasks" that incorporate vision and direction for the whole district.

For a long time, the San Diego school district's philosophy was "let a thousand flowers bloom," says Deputy Superintendent Frank Till. It learned over time that "the schools can only talk from their own level, and that often means they set standards lower than they should be." The district's intervention is to make sure principals are receiving professional development and that they fully understand the vision and objectives of the district. San Diego also is organizing principal contacts on a cluster basis, spanning K–12 leadership in areas of the city.

In Oakland, the advocacy community perhaps pushes harder on the schools than any other group. Businesses have supported reform and contributed to individual efforts, but the organizers for reform tend to be outside the system. Although advocacy groups prefer to improve what exists, "there is a lot of interest in charter schools in this community," says Martine Makower of the Urban Strategies Council. Oakland's troubles with managing the schools has led to state interventions in the past. However, for the first time in more than two decades, the new superintendent comes from within the system, a factor that may help stabilize relationships between the district office and the schools.

ALONG COME THE STATES

The power game that influences what happens in schools extends to state-level policymaking. In recent years, initiatives of state officials, especially governors and/or legislators, are more directive in the sense that

they set standards and accountability, while giving flexibility at the local level to meet the standards. The debate over top-down versus bottom-up reform largely has been settled by accepting the fact that both are needed—in a delicate balance.

Howard Hardin, coordinator of the Clark project in Louisville, doubts that teachers and principals will change because of top-down threats. "If people are honestly making an effort to grow and learn, then we need to support them," he says. "If not, then we must find ways to encourage them to find employment elsewhere. There should be no more 'safe' schools for teachers who cannot or do not want to be professional."

Research on the Kentucky Education Reform Act indicates that a major influence on improving student performance is the possibility that repeated failure of a school to improve could lead to closure by the state. The opposite—rewards for superior performance—certainly has been in the minds of most Kentucky teachers since KERA began. At Western Middle School, teachers decided they would not only get the school off the bottom but go for exceptional improvement. They focused on math because of successes with such interventions as the Algebra Project. The result was that students passed the expected threshold in an extraordinary way (they also scored above the threshold on reading and writing), and teachers won a big bonus.

Calverton Middle School in Baltimore, which slipped on almost all major indicators of performance during the Clark years, is now a "reconstituted" school under Maryland's school reform law. Because of low scores on the Maryland State Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP)—a test that emphasizes critical thinking and interdisciplinary learning (neither of which Calverton had paid much attention to)—the school must present plans for improvement and be monitored. Eventually, without improvement, it could be closed. "It took us five years to realize we did not have all the stakeholders on board," says Calverton teacher Carol Skowrunski. "Now, we're under the gun. The staff—those who stay—will become more conscientious because we are being watched."

State policies are just as subject to politics as are local ones, however. For example, the other Clark school in Baltimore, West Baltimore Middle School, also performed poorly on the MSPAP but was kept off of the reconstituted list in 1994 because the superintendent and the mayor negotiated with the state for a shorter list. "No one bought accountability," charges Chris Lambert of Students First. "North Avenue [the central office] fought state reconstitution, and the message given to the community was that 'We slew Goliath.'" After opposing state action, the school district acknowledged a year later that West Baltimore was in academic trouble, placed it on the district's own "school alert" list, and changed principals.

HOME-GROWN PRESSURE

Pressure from the threat of closure surfaced in Milwaukee as well, where the superintendent wanted to close one of the Clark schools, Parkman Middle School, because of its consistently poor student per-

"There should be no more 'safe' schools for teachers who cannot or do not want to be professional."

School-based management, as many of the Clark schools have learned, is a means, but not an end point for reform.

formance. Lafayette Golden, the third principal in five years, is anxious about "making a difference quickly in student outcomes." Faced with having no school, teachers apparently took notice. Shirley Owens, parent coordinator at Parkman, notes with mixed feelings that results on state tests improved recently, but, she asks, "was that only because we have been threatened with closing?" The teachers, she believes, "work hard on what they want to work on, but there's no one here...to kick butt."

The governor's veto of funding for the California Learning Assessment System (CLAS), a new state assessment program, removed a positive force for school improvement in that state. Based upon the California curriculum frameworks and emphasizing performance, analysis, and problem solving, CLAS influenced teachers to change their instruction. Designed by teachers, as were the curriculum frameworks, the assessments had been accepted by most teachers as a reform tool.

The veto of the assessment program did not do away with the state curriculum frameworks, however. They remain as standard-setting documents, providing a certain uniformity for instruction that has a high level of teacher buy-in. Many middle school teachers in San Diego, for example, readily discuss the frameworks and refer to them when talking about their classroom practices. This emphasis on curriculum content reflects district policies that hold improved curriculum and instruction to be vital priorities for schools–focused on higher achievement for all students.

Oakland spent a lot of time supplementing the same curriculum frameworks to reflect what it believed was a more appropriate curriculum for urban, minority students. It was slow to organize a districtwide effort to improve the teaching of content. Not until the 1994–95 school year did the district sponsor a series of workshops by subject areas based on research and new curriculum resources, aimed at reaching all teachers in a sustained way.

SCHOOL-BASED TO DO WHAT?

Where districts do not pressure schools to perform, states have applied it in some fashion, as in the reform plans of Maryland and Kentucky. This is a power dance with new steps to learn all the time, particularly as individual schools take on greater decisionmaking responsibilities under school-based management and accept accountability in return. School-based management, as many of the Clark schools have learned, is a means, but not an end point for reform.

If the district views school-based management as just that–a management rearrangement–then schools may not rise above such an expectation to address achievement issues. Deciding how to divide up money for field trips does not exactly challenge teachers professionally. School-based decisionmaking's most important function is to allow schools to organize for higher achievement, with the framework for standards a top-down contribution.

At the same time that decisions are being handed

over to schools, some central offices also are trimming their resources to help the schools. For example, 10 years ago the Louisville district employed 12 experts in language arts dispersed to the regional offices and three experts in the central office, according to Hardin. Today, the district has only one language arts specialist.

Donald Luebke, a long-term middle school principal in Milwaukee and now a consultant to the district, laments the erosion of team planning time in schools, an essential for a true middle school. It used to be one full class period four days a week, he says, but because the state said there was not enough teacher-student contact time, team planning has been reduced to 30 minutes three days a week.

Indeed, budget cuts have forced all five of the districts in the Clark network to cut central office staff, but San Diego was the only district that seemed to be systematically analyzing how to reshape itself to serve schools as they become more autonomous. At least, central office personnel were asking principals and others how the central office could serve schools better. Most central offices retained a top-down attitude toward the schools even as they were pushing decisionmaking down into the schools, allocating to the schools limited control of budgets and personnel decisions. Nor were the central offices providing schools with resources and development opportunities to take on major decisions, such as training on consensus building.

NO ANSWERS YET

The dilemma faced by state and district policymakers and officials is that the ultimate tool for dealing with school failure—takeovers or closures—has no record that has been tracked by research and that can inform decisionmaking. State takeovers of entire systems, as in New Jersey, yield physical improvements but so far little in the way of improvement in student achievement. The reconstitution process in Maryland is too new to say whether it works or not. Kentucky's plan is to send in exemplary school administrators for a year to help failing schools, but this was not triggered until 1995. California's interventions with Oakland were limited and not focused on systemic change. The top-down, bottom-up relationships in the education reform movement are still to be worked out. And several of the Clark schools are in the middle of interventions that have yet to prove what they can accomplish.

Chapter 7

160

161

ASSESSMENT: DRIVING IT, NOT BEING DRIVEN BY IT

Just do it!

This is the quirky message embedded in the initial Clark Foundation directive and the responses of the five sites to it. Within the parameters of the three "highs"—expectations, content, and support—the schools in the network were to change their instruction and organization so dramatically that their students, among the lowest performing in their districts, would be prepared for high-level work in high school.

Few realized that most of the teachers, principals, schools, and districts were amateurs at carrying out significant change. They did not know how to begin. More importantly, they did not know exactly where they were going or how to measure progress.

As in most urban districts, these sites framed their assessment policies around the requirements for Title I, in other words, upon standardized tests. Major assessment efforts were a "district thing." The data usually reached schools well into the following school year, told them little about what they needed to work on, and were seldom used to address schoolwide issues. They were tools for some schools, however, to place students in tracked classes.

During the Clark initiative years, schools and districts began to accept different ways of assessment as tools for change rather than as meddlesome burdens. Their use of assessment became an important context for reform.

Assessment policies are changing, and a critical factor in making sure that the changes do not repeat mistakes of the past is the inclusion of teachers and principals in the development of new assessments.

The foundation asked school districts to submit data on student achievement based on whatever standardized tests were being used by that district. The Educational Resources Group analyzed these test results along with other data, including classroom observations, interviews, and several types of surveys of students (see page 55 for a discussion of student achievement results). However, the schools did not know what to do with such data until assessment became an issue that belonged to them and their teachers, not just to the district.

Western teacher, Paula Giddens, takes her students out of the classroom to learn about shapes, motion, and gravity.

At first, with no particular focus on assessment, the schools decided to adopt programs, the customary way of spending outside money. Soon, the quantity of programs in any one school was likely to be impressive–advisories, cooperative learning, the Algebra Project, Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), peer mediation, peer tutoring, parent involvement, Effective Parenting Information for Children (EPIC), science education, Children's Express, Writing to Learn, and technical assistance from the Center for Early Adolescence. But no one was looking at results. Principals were like traffic cops at a summer boardwalk, keeping everyone moving, but without much purpose other than to direct them toward ice cream or pizza.

"Because there were so many projects," says Hayes Mizell, director of the foundation's Program for Student Achievement, "over time we began to understand the need for program assessment. That is, what were the results of all this?" Principals and teachers might be enthusiastic about new things they were doing–their quarterly reports often contained long lists of activities–but in most cases they did not know how or if these efforts were producing overall results.

During the first two years of the program, ERG analyzed its evaluation data and sent each school a concise summary with suggestions for improvements. However, according to ERG's Terry Clark, "in general we received no reaction, because I don't think the schools knew how to deal with evaluation data." She realized that principals and central office people were aware of the reports, but teachers were not.

Don Rollie and Vernon Polite, Clark consultants who worked on principal staff development, began to chip away at the superficiality of traditional school assessments. They led the principals through ways of using district data, but more importantly on how to construct their own evaluations of programs. This effort became leverage for the development of school-wide goals with an emphasis on results.

"We started with the premise that assessment ought to be internal and integral to the school's program," says Rollie. He introduced the principals to two rudimentary assessment tools–surveys and structured interviews with teachers, students, and parents, drawing a difference between quantitative data and qualitative data. Working at each site with the principal and a few selected staff, Rollie and his consultants showed them how to prepare the surveys and interviews, collect the data, analyze it, and disseminate it.

In Baltimore, for example, groups of teachers from both project schools went through this whole process, assessing their advisory programs. They then presented their findings–the dissemination part–to the Clark principals at one of their semi-annual meetings. "They stood up in front of these principals from all over the country and explained their data," Rollie recalls. "It was a wonderful experience for them."

This type of assessment, he contends, is crucial to systemic change because, unlike most traditional

assessment practices, "this is not short-term stuff, nor does it avoid looking at basic values within a school."

The schools throughout the Clark network began to set up assessment committees. At Iroquois Middle School in Louisville, teachers on the assessment committee designed surveys to evaluate specific programs. Then, having built trust among their peers, they moved on to broader issues such as assessing how well teachers' classroom practices "fit" with the Kentucky state-wide assessments, for example, how often they used open-response questions. For Iroquois' principal during this time, Cheryl DeMarsh, the emphasis on program assessment is not just about improving student scores. It is "the bigger picture...of changing our instructional and assessment paradigms."

Bev Sorgi, language arts teacher at Western Middle School in Louisville, speaks the new language of assessment. "We have data-driven policymaking," she says. Sorgi has gathered and disaggregated data from student, faculty, and parent surveys. Data taken before the introduction of a program and data showing results are used to plan staff development. The faculty, she adds, "increasingly uses data sources to make decisions and develop programs."

Assessments—of students and programs—ultimately tell us what is working or not working to improve student achievement. Assessment policy thus becomes a district and state issue and a public concern. The Clark schools that became data-driven did so in a changing context of student assessment policy taking place in their states and in the country. The much-maligned, norm-referenced national standardized tests are giving way to different types of tests that put a premium on performance and on critical thinking and writing skills.

As urban districts with large numbers of students eligible for Title I services, the Clark sites face profound changes in testing policies. Title I requires evaluation data, and in the past that usually was in the form of standardized test results. Because of revisions in the Title I law, students served by that program are to be measured by the same state-wide assessments as other students, and those assessments are to be aligned with curriculum and include performance standards. In addition, the revised Title I law mandates that a larger percentage of eligible secondary school students be provided with services than in the past. Previously, Title I funds were spent almost entirely on elementary-age students. Consequently, these changes in assessments under Title I will affect middle schools much more than before.

The end result for students accustomed to low expectations should be very positive. There are some interim problems, however.

PROBLEMS WITH USING STANDARDIZED TEST RESULTS

For the Clark Foundation, using standardized test data to track student achievement was problematic. First, obtaining, using, and making sense of district-provided standardized test data for individual students was fraught with problems. Even when districts were

cooperative and had the resources to provide ERG with the data, computer tapes were not usually available for at least a half year after the tests were given. And districts changed the tests and the grade-levels that took the tests.

Once ERG received the data, they had to make sense of the information before it could be analyzed. Data frequently arrived with poor documentation, misleading labels, or for the wrong group of students, according to ERG. Finally, when districts changed tests, old data had to be converted to newer norms so comparisons could be made.

Once these problems were resolved, results were analyzed over time and found to be equivocal. The foundation believes such test data minimize the effect of the changes taking place in the Clark schools. As ERG's Terry Clark points out, skills like problem solving don't show up on traditional standardized tests. The ability of these tests to reflect change is unreliable, according to Walt Haney of the Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation and Educational Policy. Test norms depend on growth expectations for students, but in reality the pace of academic growth shrinks from one grade level to another, making the traditional norm-referenced tests "relatively insensitive to curriculum variations." At the grade 7–8 level, for example, "national test battery norms show that as a result of a whole year of maturation and educational experience, students change only about the equivalent of 0.4 standard deviations," he says. This means that changed school practices have little potential to demonstrate an effect through standardized tests.

MOVING TEACHERS AS WELL AS TESTS

A whammy that hits many teachers is how ill-prepared they are to make the transition to new definitions of results. The prevailing observation of school and teacher behavior is that tests drive instruction. The emphasis of traditional standardized tests on discrete, unrelated skills and short answers induces instructional practices that look the same. Even in the tests they design for classroom use and the drills they use to prepare students for test days, teachers themselves have become "standardized."

Years of this kind of behavior cannot be undone in a short time. Former Calverton Middle School Principal Earl Lee, fingering a state report about what the Baltimore school must do under "reconstitution," alternately criticizes MSPAP that led to his school's dilemma and expresses frustration about his teachers' inabilities to adjust to the new tests. "Everyone understands that we can't do what we've done in the past," he explains, "but staff development is not near what we need to help teachers break old habits and deal with MSPAP." Baltimore, he adds, provides only four half-days for staff development during the school year. A study of MSPAP state-wide revealed the same concern—that teachers need considerable preparation to be able to adjust their instruction to its standards. However, because MSPAP test items are developed by teachers and graded by them, teachers generally

approve of the new assessment approaches.

Former Iroquois Principal DeMarsh staunchly supports the Kentucky education reforms, but she ruefully believes that the reforms assume all teachers are competent and experienced. Not only does it take two years to "break in" new teachers so that their instruction is aligned with the Kentucky assessment structure, she explains, but she is faced with reluctance by teachers to take on eighth grade classes just because this is the middle grades year in which the high-stakes assessments are given. As the assessments broaden to include practical living, vocational education, and the arts, her problem is "to get all teachers to accept these as valuable, to be responsible for them."

San Diego has pursued new approaches to assessment, encouraging its teachers and administrators to be bold. (It is still looking for a good substitute for CLAS, however.)

THE LIMITS OF PORTFOLIOS, TOO

At Mann and Muirlands, particularly the latter, a "portfolio culture" developed to the extent that teachers understood the potential and the limits of using portfolios for assessment by the end of the initiative. By contrast, middle school teachers in Milwaukee, expressing their concerns at a session on portfolios during a national meeting in the fall of 1994, were still at the where-do-we-store-the-stuff phase, even though district policies were moving toward portfolio assessments.

Kozy and Parkman were ahead of the game, however, in building on their experience with Writing to Learn to experiment with portfolios for assessment. According to Kathy Januchowski, language arts teacher at Kozy, every student now keeps an interdisciplinary portfolio, one that includes core subjects as well as entries from fine arts, technology education, family life, and career classes.

The two San Diego schools' efforts illustrate that using portfolios for assessment was no snap move. As part of the PACE project funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, 10-person teams of teachers were invited to several week-long seminars on portfolios, including a summer institute at Harvard University. The three-year project created networks, feedback, and deepening understanding not only of the richness of portfolios but also of the temptations to settle for the superficial. As expert as the Muirlands teachers have become, student portfolios at the school "are still only an assessment of student growth and students' ability to reflect," says Cat Xander, the Clark project coordinator in San Diego. They are not yet an assessment of the full range of abilities a good teacher needs to have. "In no school are portfolios a pure tool of evaluation," she explains.

Muirlands Principal Cassandra Countryman agrees on the limits, saying that portfolios can never replace more traditional testing. However, she finds them "powerful opportunities for teaching and learning, allowing teachers to actually catch where their instruction is weakest long before any other kind of assessment."

Mann is not as far along as Muirlands in portfolio

development, primarily because not as many teachers have had access to the professional development needed. The Mann faculty, about 100 full-time teaching staff, decided it could not afford to release 10 teachers so frequently, opting instead to allow only five to participate. At Muirlands, one-fourth of the entire faculty received staff development on portfolio assessments. A critical mass of teachers familiar with portfolio assessments is important, notes Xander.

Mann, however, planned to have the use of portfolios as a school-wide strategy for "instruction" in place by fall 1995.

Beverly Bimes-Michalak encourages the use of portfolios for assessment through Writing to Learn, but she admits that teachers are reluctant to use them for such purposes. "They don't know how to devise their own rubrics for judging the portfolios," she explains, "because they haven't seen any really good models."

For most of the Clark initiative years, San Diego Superintendent Bertha Pendleton managed the project when she was deputy superintendent. The emphasis upon collecting and analyzing data convinced her that good, consistent data have to be the base for accountability. "Our experience with data, or results, under Clark showed us how much we needed to do and could do, but it was tough," says Linda Carstens, an assessment expert with the school district.

"What Clark did was change the conversation in the district through the efforts of the two schools," says the current deputy superintendent, Frank Till. "These schools were the first to create data packages around standards and expectations. They proved that schools in transition need to be data-driven, even though we may call it standards-driven."

Pendleton, when she became superintendent, set out five "design tasks," or areas of reform:

- curriculum, instruction, assessment, and technology;
- standards and accountability;
- health and human services;
- public support and engagement; and
- high-performance organization.

She is holding schools accountable for 16 objectives under these design tasks, requiring school portfolios that are slowly moving from "show and tell" to significant assessments of their progress on the objectives. A reporting schedule for school performance indicators tells what measures are to be used, who is responsible for the reporting, and a timetable. It shows how deep a data-driven system can dig, connecting each reporting piece to an objective and design task.

Milwaukee, too, is gradually changing its assessment policies, according to assessment director Mary Quilling. The district is moving away from standardized tests to performance and portfolio assessments. The state also had begun developing performance assessments to be used by school districts on a voluntary basis, but the legislature's decision to strip most of the state education department

roles and transfer them to the governor's office canceled this plan. Yet, by putting what's been developed so far by the state together with local assessment efforts, the schools, Quilling predicts, "will receive data that are much richer." She admits that schools initially "were doing their own thing" regarding portfolio assessments, but the district is now working on how to manage a portfolio assessment system better and provide continuity.

An expert on Title I assessment, Quilling supports the move toward alternative types of assessment for disadvantaged students, noting that alternative assessments provide a better way "of looking at what actually is happening in instruction."

Another Milwaukee effort to integrate new assessments is its school-to-work initiative. Starting with ten pilot schools in 1994–95, it expanded the following year to 44 schools, including one-half of the district's middle schools. They are piloting performance assessments linked to the school district's new standards.

BOTTOM LINE: ASSESSMENT POLICY MOVES TO THE SCHOOL

Each of these districts followed different policies on assessments and used different measurements when the Clark initiative began. That was true at the end, also, but the nature of the assessments was changing toward alignment with a richer curriculum and with performance standards. In Maryland and Kentucky, the impetus for a different kind of assessment came from the state. In Milwaukee, the former superintendent's leadership moved the system toward aligning assessments with new standards adopted by the district. In San Diego, innovations in assessment policy were grounded in district goals and state curriculum frameworks. (However, in Oakland, a plan for "data-driven decisionmaking" that would have trained teams from the middle schools to design and use data collection tools, such as observations, interviews, surveys, and portfolios, was still on paper a year after the Clark initiative ended.)

Although assessment policies in all five cities were still fluid as the initiative ended, there was no doubt that assessment had become a priority within most of the Clark schools. It no longer was someone else's agenda. Furthermore, teachers in most of the schools had learned what it means to be data-driven. They were becoming owners of assessment policies for their schools.

Although assessment policies in all five cities were still fluid as the initiative ended, there was no doubt that assessment had become a priority within most of the Clark schools.

Chapter 8

THE UNION STORY

The five years' of the Clark initiative witnessed dramatic changes in the status of unions and their priorities, both at the local and national levels. As has been true for several decades, principals continued to chafe at their lack of control over selection of personnel because of union contracts–tenure and seniority being inviolable tenets of unionism. Yet, education reforms require some flexibility on these issues.

During the project years, national teachers' unions were trying to understand how to adjust. Both major unions–the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers–mounted their own reform programs, although AFT disbanded its restructuring center and began to focus strongly on higher standards and high-stakes testing during the years of the Clark grants. The AFT units operate very independently of the national office, but a common theme of both the national and locals has been the union's opposition to privately run public schools and some choice initiatives. This controversy was most evident in Baltimore.

For organizations that reached their zenith by following the industrial model of standardization of policies across the board, the current character of education reform is threatening to unions. When schools are organized to do their own thing, as they are under decentralization, or put into the hands of people who are not part of a hierarchy of power, as with charter schools, the very heart of organized labor is challenged. School-site decisionmaking and charter schools empower teachers–a union goal–but they also blur the line between teaching and administration, a distinction important for unions to maintain.

Yet, like so many other factors in the Clark cities, these struggles over redefining power relationships between union policies and reform objectives in the Clark cities were couched in the local context.

The influence of teachers' unions on school reform depends greatly on the extent to which unions adapt to reform agendas or remain inflexible–often because they function in a "union town."

The five Clark sites represented a full spectrum of the power of teachers' unions. In every school, certainly, there are teachers who define their own professionalism beyond the spirit of the contract, but when trying to change policies and practices, most administrators must cope with how carefully the contract is read.

For example, Parkman Middle School in Milwaukee ventured ahead of the rest of the district on using portfolio assessments and wanted them to be graded

As coordinator of the Clark project in Louisville, Howard Hardin has juggled many sometimes competing players, including the teachers' union.

Milwaukee is a "union town," and strict interpretation of union contracts often inhibits the kind of flexibility needed for school reforms.

by teachers from other schools. Because stipends were paid to the graders, the task could be assigned only to senior teachers, according to the union contract. Looking ahead to districtwide portfolio assessments, Deputy Superintendent Robert Jasna (later superintendent), worried that "I don't have enough senior people to do it right."

Superintendent Howard Fuller, who came from the social services arena, supported wider parental choice in Milwaukee, such as through charters or vouchers limited to public schools. Choice was anathema to union leadership, and its support for three successful school board candidates opposed to choice led to Fuller's resignation. Because of its industrial base and working-class population, Milwaukee is a "union town," and strict interpretation of union contracts often inhibits the kind of flexibility needed for school reforms.

On the other hand, San Diego is a conservative, non-union community that is quick to criticize unions and teachers. The financially strapped district was unable to raise teachers' salaries during most of the Clark project (its only new investment was to reduce class size for the primary grades), but district officials are using outside funds to bring union leadership into the development of programs under different grants. "We are trying to include the union in non-union dialogues around reforms," says Deputy Superintendent Till, who also is coordinator of the Clark project in San Diego. (Nonetheless, in 1995, teachers took a strong negotiations stand, asking for large salary increases.)

Louisville administrators rarely mention union problems in carrying out reforms. Most reforms there have been non-union issues, except for a change that project coordinator Howard Hardin wanted to introduce in the middle schools. Troubled by the number of teachers who benefitted from extensive professional development because of the Clark initiative and then moved on to schools not serving low-income students, he proposed that teachers in the Clark schools agree to stay a minimum number of years. This violated seniority policies in the contract, the union pointed out.

Hardin acknowledges that teachers should not be forced to work where they don't want to be, but the talent drain from needy schools is a problem. Still, he now rationalizes, "perhaps it is a good idea to spread the talent around. That other schools want to recruit from the Clark sites is flattering to them." Moreover, Western is now getting requests from teachers to be transferred in, unheard of before.

As in most districts with collective bargaining, seniority rules hamper Oakland principals from building the staff they would like to have, according to Lynn Dodd, principal of King Estates Junior High School. Principals must take into account credentials, seniority, and affirmative action in that order when adding or cutting staff. No mention of skills and abilities. "We don't have much flexibility," she says. On the other hand, the teachers' union has supported the conversion of all remaining junior high schools to middle schools, despite the disruption to current positions

that would cause. The union even "told us we were taking too much time planning and not acting," says Yolanda Peeks, deputy superintendent.

The Baltimore district's flirtation with all sorts of reforms, especially the schools run by the outside for-profit Educational Alternatives, Inc. (including one middle school) created defiance toward district initiatives on the part of the union. Both local and national union leadership opposition to the EAI agreement distracted everyone from reasoned discussion about other reforms, such as the Clark initiative. Teachers went their own way, drawing up a petition to get a public vote on smaller class sizes, which was their priority. Principals, it should be added, acted on their own priority, too, drawing up a plan to deal with troublemaking students in alternative centers away from their schools because they considered the central office insensitive to the problems principals faced.

Even though the whole school system changed to school-site decisionmaking, Clark principals in Baltimore felt hindered in carrying it out because of traditional union contract language. At Calverton, the problem was one of persuading good teachers to stay if they had the seniority to move on elsewhere. At West Baltimore, the principal's desire to persuade some teachers to transfer or be evaluated out of teaching was hampered by tenure, seniority, and other union contract protections.

THE SINS OF OMISSION

The extent of work-to-the-contract behavior often depends on how much teachers and their unions are included in the design and implementation of reforms. In Baltimore, says Jerry Baum, president of the Fund for Educational Excellence, "very few leaders in the community see teachers as being important, as needing to be empowered to take responsibility."

The Baltimore Teachers' Union feels the same way about district policies. Irene Dandridge, co-president, says the district "makes no effort to use ideas and experiences of those in the classrooms." The lack of a consistent vision, she adds, was one reason why the district did not give support to changing the curriculum or other factors at the Clark schools.

All of the Clark sites have bought into school-based decisionmaking in some form. It seems inevitable that much of the traditional division between teachers and administrators in these districts, divisions embodied in union contracts, will give way to what researchers Julia Koppich and Charles Kerchner term "professional unionism."[1] This means accepting change and moving toward greater professional roles for teachers while still protecting collective bargaining. Schools where an informed, skilled core of teachers wants to move forward on reforms should not be held back by teachers who do not want to change—and are protected from doing so by union contracts. The idea that professionalism and unionism can co-exist certainly was evident in most of the Clark schools able to wrestle flexibility out of union contracts—and to support those teachers committed to change.

At Calverton in Baltimore, the problem was one of persuading good teachers to stay if they had the seniority to move on elsewhere.

Chapter 9

184

185

THE ANOMALY OF CENTRAL OFFICE LEADERSHIP

Ultimately, middle grades students will do well in urban districts if the districts are able to create consensus and commitment for reform, using student achievement as their measure. All of the Clark districts presented plans to do that, but the experience of the project makes it quite clear that more than plans and individual leadership are necessary for systemic reform.

Urban districts need a consistency of vision and purpose based on high achievement of all students in order to drive middle grades reform—or any systemic reform—through the maze of competing interests, instability, and politics.

Granted, the urban districts in the Clark network did not intend to drop all of their other priorities to concentrate only on middle school reform. The Clark initiative was just one of many efforts underway in all of the districts. Nor was the foundation's monetary investment enough to finance large-scale change. Compared to Title I resources, for example, the Clark funds were small change. However, they represented discretionary funds schools could use as they wish, money districts could use as leverage to create an exemplar of reform within their middle grades.

Unfortunately, schools initially viewed the grant as a way to set up new "programs" rather than to support fundamental changes that would lead to high expectations—and higher achievement. The manner that technical assistance first came to the schools—through foundation-sponsored resource experts who descended on the schools in rapid succession—probably contributed to the programmatic focus. Schools felt obligated to try out as many new ideas as possible. Some of the schools gradually began to shape the resources to their needs. Some stayed fixed on programs.

Districts reacted the same way, thinking "programs," not systemic reform. Urban districts often are sophisticated grant-getters, with development offices that search for "requests for proposals" to answer. However, they are not accustomed to being more than minimally accountable for results from the outside funding. They also prefer to think in terms of programs, not of reforms for themselves. Once the Clark grant was secured, most of the district offices avoided using the initiative as their opportunity to build a capacity to support reform.

All of them selected central office people to oversee the effort, appointed advisory committees, submitted quarterly reports, and redrew plans halfway through the grant period. These are ordinary and perfunctory tasks, common to grant management. But they do not represent leadership for systemic

Cat Xander, left, district liaison to the Clark schools, and Bertha Pendleton, San Diego's school superintendent, made sure the two project schools knew they were expected to improve.

change, nor do they reflect any new thinking at the district level about how to complement school reforms with district reforms.

"We did not know how to go about the change process," admits Yolanda Peeks, coordinator of the Clark initiative for its last two years in Oakland and now an assistant superintendent. Despite low teacher morale and constant budget problems, Oakland did try. Its original plan for middle grades reform, drawn up by the Clark coordinator with little input from the schools, preceded by only a few months a new superintendent's mandate that each school prepare a five-year plan for improvement. Then followed another central office effort–15 demonstration schools that would select from a menu of reform models the one they would implement–with pressure on the Clark schools from the superintendent to participate. The agendas kept getting crossed in the three Clark schools.

Some of the promised programs and supports to the demonstration schools, such as an extended school year, were cancelled in order to finance yet another middle grades reform plan, introduced in 1995. This was the third middle grades initiative in recent years, and the district "rightly deserves cynicism from teachers because we never completed the process before," says Peeks.

In a very candid assessment of its attempt at middle grades reform, the final report to the Clark Foundation from Oakland officials admitted that, despite some cutting-edge change initiatives, "Oakland remains a traditional, urban school district:"

> It is sometimes overwhelmed by unexpected crises; it persists in using questionable, "business-as-usual" practices (such as split reading, retentions and summer vacations); it preaches participative management while it honors and promotes old-fashioned authoritarian principals.

After several turnovers of the Clark coordinator in Baltimore, an assistant superintendent took over and developed an elaborate plan for an Institute for Middle School Reform that would link all the city's middle schools, provide staff development, and coordinate various efforts underway in the middle grades. As exemplary as the plan seemed to be, it was just one more activity in a school district flooded with reform projects that floated on good intentions but lacked a visionary anchor. And the Institute was still waiting to be implemented at the end of the Clark grant.

Baltimore's plate included updated facilities, a computer-retrievable curriculum, the Efficacy Project to set high academic standards, and site-based management. "But none of these is connected," observes Chris Lambert of Students First, a project of the local Advocates for Children and Youth, Inc. "No one asks if any of these produces results with kids."

The Fund for Educational Excellence attempted to build a cross-group consensus around middle school reform (business, principals, teachers, parents, students, and community agencies and groups) through a series of forums followed by focus group discussions. The upshot, says the Fund's director, Jerry Baum, was a realization that "a lot of distractions are

going on, including tension between the central office and the Enterprise schools (site-based management schools) over who should lead." This causes one to question, he says, whether the lack of a vision for the Baltimore schools "is by default or is deliberate."

Similarly, Milwaukee's middle school plan languished in a central office concerned about turnovers and budget cuts, then about the new superintendent's call for a revised K–12 curriculum. At the end of the project there was no remaining middle school initiative as such. "It is part of everything else that is going on," says Jasna.

In these three districts, the fuzzy structure around middle school reform prevented the schools from achieving what might have been possible through the grant years. Each of the districts had their coordinators and liaisons, but these people did not have the power to connect the top down with the bottom up. There was faint message–and little help–for the schools about how middle grades reform fit into any overall vision for the district, even if such a vision existed. Conversations about middle school reform did not extend beyond the network schools.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP

San Diego and Louisville, by contrast, made the message much clearer.

No specific model of urban middles grades reform is suggested by their experience, but the schools in both of these sites thrived and progressed much more than the schools in the other three districts. And middle-grades reform spread beyond the individual project schools. Both districts experienced turnovers in superintendents; San Diego coped with constant budget cuts and a growing minority student enrollment. Why were their results different from the other three cities?

First, the schools understood that they were expected to improve. In San Diego, a long, inclusive process of developing reform initiatives pushed everyone in the school system toward higher student achievement as the goal. The turnover in superintendents, when the deputy moved up to the top spot, only reinforced this purpose for reforms. Under Bertha Pendleton, the objectives became even more specific. The Clark schools, in addition, became centers for data collection and analysis that pinpointed their progress, with lessons both for the schools and for the district.

Louisville's unusual organization–in which principals reported directly to the superintendent–also encouraged schools to be accountable. More significant during the grant period, however, was the influence of the Kentucky Education Reform Act, which mandated publicly reported assessments, tied them to sanctions and rewards, and gave each school specific targets for academic improvement.

Another important strategy used by San Diego and Louisville was the importance given to the message carrier. In the other districts, central office people rarely came to the schools, or, if they did, they were recognized as not having much power in the structure. Most contacts with the middle schools

occurred on the central districts' turf. In San Diego and Louisville, the central office liaisons had status.

San Diego's deputy superintendent served as project coordinator. Similar assignments were made in Baltimore and Milwaukee; the difference, however, was that the liaisons who worked under Bertha Pendleton, now under Frank Till, were and still are part of the inner circle in the district administration. Liaison Cat Xander, for example, visits Mann and Muirlands on a weekly basis at least and has organized district-wide, highly successful one-day conferences on middle grades reform. The Clark schools, notes Till, were used "to change the conversation in the district about reforms."

In 1989, the superintendent in Louisville asked Howard Hardin, who was then directing assessment and school improvement for the district, to take on the Clark initiative. That he placed responsibility so high in the central office indicated "a real commitment from him," says Hardin. Although a new superintendent has since reorganized the central office, plans for district-wide middle school reform are going forward.

A hands-on contact with the schools, Hardin is in the schools regularly, develops community resources for them, confronts them with data he collects through surveys in addition to the state assessment data, and assesses what else and what direction the schools need to take. Realizing that teachers are often reluctant to leave their classrooms for staff development sessions, he piloted a system of interns, expert teachers who work for a semester out of the central office as standards/curriculum/best practices resources for teachers at the school site.

Some of the success that Xander and Hardin have with the schools is due to their personalities, but more is due to the style of district leadership they represent. Their work in the schools is neither superficial nor autocratic. They support principals and teachers, acting mostly as critical friends. "The bulk of our Clark money went into developing people," says Hardin. Because of that, the impact of professional development opportunities offered by Clark in Louisville did not fade out, as in some of the other cities, but were followed up and focused on the district's goals for the schools.

The three "highs" of the Clark project fit with San Diego's intention to become a standards-based school system, says Till. Thus, professional development offered by the Clark project in San Diego reinforced the emphasis upon standards. The central office, he admits, had once been organized like a high school–highly departmentalized–"but it showed it could demonstrate new behaviors," and these transitions are still in progress as the administration continues to ask schools what form of leadership they want in a decentralized system. "We're asking really good questions to get us to the next level," says Till.

Teachers and principals serve as experts for the annual one-day middle-school conferences sponsored by the San Diego district–put on for about $5,000. It is an annual reminder of best practices in the district and a vehicle for principals and teachers to establish connections with each other over instructional improvements. "We are borrowing from each other," says Muir-

lands Principal Cassandra Countryman, noting that other schools in her area are now adopting detracking policies. To her, this is evidence of systemic change.

In addition, the middle school principals are doing less "griping" and having more discussions about substantive issues, says Xander. "They are concentrating on moving on together," she says. "They may not be on the same page, but they're in the same book." Julie Elliott of Mann Middle School confirms this change in attitude on a wider scale, describing how the principals in her Crawford Cluster (the schools feeding into Crawford High School) are looking at the K–12 spectrum of problems and possible solutions.

A 1995 audit of middle grades reform in San Diego by the Center for Early Adolescence found that "nearly everyone interviewed by the team cited the middle level as having played the lead in district education reform." It also reported "cohesiveness and collegiality among middle-level principals."

The middle school effort in Louisville laid the foundation for plans to go systemwide on middle grades reform. However, it also made it possible for a much larger circle around middle schools to develop. The Coalition of Middle Schools is a new county-wide effort growing out of the Jefferson County Collaborative, a city and county planning group. Over several years, the collaborative has been able to solve turf issues and bring all sorts of services and agencies to the table to ensure that all children and families receive services they need. This effort includes some joint budgeting. Schools are a major player in the collaborative, serving as its fiscal agent and often providing facilities.

In the past, says Lynn Rippy, head of the Youth Alliance in the mayor's office, the schools have not been "accessible institutions" for service providers. That is, they were closed to outsiders. KERA's establishment of Youth Service Centers, so successful at the three Clark schools, opened up the schools and allowed city and county officials to see the possibilities for delivering services to all families. The Coalition of Middle Schools, funded by Clark, turned the focus on middle schools and on involving students and parents in designing the services for them.

Each of the 24 middle schools in the county system now has a business partner. The Coalition worked with all schools on needs assessments, deciding to concentrate on two schools having particular trouble meeting the KERA standards. It also started the first Neighborhood Place, a one-stop service center for families, and plans eventually to cover the whole county with eight centers. The Youth Service Center coordinators are brought together through the Neighborhood Place. Because caseworkers and mentors empower families to work out solutions and stick to them, the impact on families is evident, says Rippy. This has produced a "change in the sense and feeling among the agencies," she says. "They are really cooperating now."

Because of its work with middle schools, she adds, the Coalition has helped the city see its role in school reform. "This has been a healthy experience for the community," she explains, "making it a real school community, not just a collection of buildings."

Chapter 10

196

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

197

TURNING THE OUTSIDE INSIDE

Outside investments in urban school reform, like the Clark project, hope to be much more than a sparkler that dazzles briefly, then fades out. That might have been accepted as inevitable not too long ago, but within the foundation community, at least, long-term results and even institutionalization of successful efforts have become part of the bargain foundations make with school districts. Not only are the staffs of many major foundations actively involved in reshaping programs as they go along, but they are much more aggressive about evaluation of the programs.

For some of the Clark districts, such involvement was unexpected. They were not prepared for an ongoing relationship with foundation officials or for the implied objective that the reforms would become part of a district's mission. On the other hand, Clark staff also were on a learning curve, finding out where to draw the line between infusion and intrusion. Out of the tension came some basic understandings.

School officials and outside funders need to cooperate on planning and evaluation of change initiatives with the goal of developing internal support for successful initiatives after outside support ends.

The Clark Foundation was not immediately aware of how limited were the capacities of most of the network schools to make significant changes. Its strategy at the beginning infused all sorts of opportunities for school staff to select from curriculum improvement and student support programs, along with technical assistance for each. For many schools, this was overload.

As one Louisville teacher recalled, "We were all starving for something, and we just jumped at everything we could, thinking this is what we needed. It really took a toll on us...."

Gradually—and in some places the evolution took two or more years—most of the schools began to use the new resources to drive what they wanted instead of the reverse. They began to combine the Clark resources with Title I plans, or direct Clark money to priorities set by the staff after significant discussions about where they were going. Their own assessments of the programs they adopted, such as student advi-

In Louisville, home of Churchill Downs, Western's Equine Unit teaches students about the economic importance of the thoroughbred horse industry in Kentucky.

sories or Writing to Learn, helped provide more focus.

Some rejected programs such as Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) because its computer costs were too steep; others made the investment and were pleased with the decision. Both HOTS and the Algebra Project require extensive teacher development; when enthusiastic supporters of individual programs such as these moved on to other schools, some Clark schools decided to use the resources elsewhere. They made modifications. For example, King Estates Junior High School in Oakland, very supportive of the Algebra Project, decided to work with a feeder elementary school to introduce it in the sixth grade.

OUTSIDE AND INSIDE TOGETHER

While Clark provided funding for student support activities, its major investment and lasting impact was among teachers and administrators. Again, a Louisville teacher noted three years into the project, "I think we have come a long way in getting to the root of the problem, which was our attitude...." Through networks, meetings, and most of all consistent opportunities to learn from the changes they made in classrooms, a large number of teachers in many Clark schools gradually accepted the idea that all students could learn at much higher levels. All schools have a core of teachers who will not change their attitudes, but the momentum in more than half of the Clark schools became directed at changing teacher behaviors and skills as much, or more, than changing those of students.

Yet, the schools most able to coalesce around priorities and missions had help from their districts. Both San Diego and Louisville school districts accepted the ongoing relationship with foundation officials, the emphasis upon data collection, and the need to modify plans and ideas based on what the evaluations said. Not that there wasn't grumbling on both sides at times, but district and foundation policies and practices were going in the same direction.

By contrast, Baltimore district officials performed well on paper, drawing up elaborate plans that put the Clark Foundation on the periphery, except for funding. The assistant superintendent in charge preferred other outside consultants. Meanwhile, the district ignored its leadership responsibility toward the two schools in the network, despite foundation evaluations that documented problems. In March 1995, a state review team visiting Calverton Middle School as part of the reconstitution process found no staff development structure. The only effort teachers recalled from the Clark initiative was its support of a relationship the school already had with The Johns Hopkins University.

The foundation's expectations created tension in Oakland and Milwaukee also, though not as overtly as in Baltimore. None of these three districts began the Clark initiative with plans to continue the effort. Thus, the long-range goals of the foundation conflicted with the districts' short-range perspectives on what to expect from their involvement.

For Beverly Bimes-Michalak, developer of Writing to Learn, the clue to permanent adoption of programs that lead to systemic change is teacher own-

ership of them. Prepared staff development programs that meet the needs of all school districts are hard to find, she says, but when staff development can be modified to fit what teachers and schools need, ownership is created. Writing to Learn, she points out, "recognizes the fact that teachers are best prepared to teach their colleagues," and, if this is institutionalized, it creates a rolling, energized system of staff development.

Some districts developed statements adopted by their school boards that expressed a vision for the middle grades; at the most, these provided official sanctions of the efforts. San Diego became data-driven, say officials, because of the Clark initiative. Louisville's experience with professional development during the funding years provided a base for going districtwide on middle grades reform. Also, that city's Coalition of Middle Schools created a stable structure for enlisting community support behind the needs of middle grades students.

Oakland drew up a new middle grades reform plan calling for conversion to a grades 6–8 structure throughout the district and equal offerings at all schools. The former action has been postponed; the latter is underway. Involvement with Clark, says Yolanda Peeks, was a "powerful learning experience" for the district. If the efforts had been confined to just the three schools, she adds, it would have remained a small project, "but we learned that the schools could not make reforms unless the district itself made major changes." Still, there is some wariness among parents and advocacy groups about a new Middles Grades Education Council. The district proposed it to be advisory; others want it to have authority to force change.

Fund-raising consultants provided by the Clark Foundation to advise two of the districts found their capabilities for obtaining sustained support for reform to be almost nil. The districts had no personnel and few structures or contacts that would make outside support possible. Nor had they thought strategically about how to keep reforms going once the Clark Foundation's money was gone.

THE FOUNDATION'S HOMEWORK

Over the years, the foundation also moved toward more focus, less of the try-everything mode. It had all along divided its interests between individual schools in the program and the district, but began to realize how very important district reform and focus were. "If the central office is not playing a constructive role in the dynamics of school reform, the whole venture may be stillborn," Hayes Mizell, director of the Clark middle grades program, told teachers and administrators from the participating districts toward the end of the project. Many students, he said, do not have the luxury of waiting for reforms to happen school by school.

Another lesson the foundation learned is that although schools are "about" a lot of things, the ultimate result of reforms must be improvement of student performance. After pushing this goal through the structure of the project, the Clark Foundation, in March 1994, changed the name of its effort—from the Pro-

Another lesson learned from the Clark project and its relationships with the school districts surely must be the limits of outside support for reform.

gram for Disadvantaged Youth to the Program for Student Achievement. This made it absolutely clear that middle school reform is linked to academic standards. The foundation's future plans to work with system-wide reforms in a new set of school districts are predicated on the commitment to students' demonstration of high levels of performance by the end of the eighth grade.

BUT THERE ARE LIMITS

While not officially discussed in any of its annual reports or other communications about the initiative, another lesson learned from the Clark project and its relationships with the school districts surely must be the limits of outside support for reform. There is a point at which outside funding is the wrong solution.

Urban school districts cannot abdicate their responsibility for seriously troubled schools.

During the five years of the Clark project, three or four schools out of the 12 became even worse-performing environments for students and teachers than they were when the effort began. They started as very troubled, dysfunctional schools, chosen, no doubt, by the districts as places that needed a boost. The districts may have analyzed their problems correctly, but they underestimated the efforts that would be needed to change them.

Discretionary, outside money could not rescue these schools. Technical assistance, professional development, curriculum ideas—they all fell into deep wells. Once selected, the schools were almost ignored by the districts, as if they were saying the schools' problems were now up to the foundation to solve. Toward the end of the project, one school had been identified by the state as failing (though it had never before been cited by the district); another had been singled out by the superintendent as deserving to be closed; and another's future was shaky, primarily because many parents exercised the only control they know and refused to send their children to the school.

Except for small projects, these schools did not have the capacity to take advantage of incentives for reform. They needed massive help in gaining control and then in reshaping their curriculum, support, and teacher capabilities to be very different places for students. Not until that reshaping was on firm ground could they have been expected to take the risks asked of them in the Clark initiative.

Even if districts provided such help, it would be only fingers in the dike. The schools in the Clark network that struggled and stumbled the most over reforms certainly held low expectations for most students and had done so for a long time. Previous reports about the Clark initiative pointed this out. The fact that students in other schools, who also were minority, poor, and accustomed to failure, demonstrated they could perform at higher levels makes one angry at and scornful of the schools where students did not have opportunities to succeed.

However, as the context for reform became clearer toward the end of the Clark initiative, it also

became more obvious that the anger should be directed at systems as much or more than at schools. The reasons for student failure in these schools does not begin when students enter. It begins with the selection and preparation of teachers and principals for urban schools with predominantly minority and low-income enrollments. It continues when no institution–higher education, unions, the district itself–provides teachers with the knowledge and experience that challenge attitudes and behaviors which hold back students of color.

Despite what they had in common, the teachers and principals attending meetings of the Clark network varied considerably in their capacity to delve deeply into professional concerns and intrinsically believe their students were capable of challenging work. This was a reflection more of the systems where the teachers and principals work than of their own potential to be excellent teachers for all students. Most of these teachers have good professional skills; few are bigots. Yet, many were unable to look at disadvantaged, young adolescents and see in them future intellectually lively adults. Nor could the teachers picture themselves as being essential to making sure their students become such adults.

The real, unexamined problem is that teachers and principals who had difficulty in stretching their professionalism labored in systems that lacked professionalism, too. It is not just a problem of bureaucratic agendas superceding reform ones. It is one of a lack of quality ideas, stimulating discussions around student learning, and a commitment to high standards for minority students. Following one plan after another with tired, superficial reasoning and proposals is no way to stimulate school or teacher enthusiasm for reform.

It should be no surprise to the educators in these districts that alternatives to the systems as they now exist threaten the status quo. Whether parents and policymakers support charter schools, vouchers, or private contracts to run schools–all of which are being tried in one or more of the Clark districts–they are really speaking out against systems that fail to put student achievement above all else. Everyone is culpable in not believing in the capacity of their students, but the low expectations and inappropriate instruction given minority and low-income students cannot be overcome school by school. It is a critical systemic problem.

The schools in the Clark network that struggled and stumbled the most over reforms certainly held low expectations for most students and had done so for a long time.

HIGHER EDUCATION: THE MISSING LINK

Higher education played a minor—almost nonexistent role—in middle grades reform in the five Clark districts, even though there were urban universities at every site, often multiple campuses. Part of the reason is that urban districts tend to design and carry out their own staff development activities, but universities also are generally slow to adapt their programs to the reforms in content and pedagogy in the field.

Louisville began its effort with a partnership with the University of Louisville to produce thematic curriculum units, but by the second year it was obvious teachers wanted to do the work themselves. A follow-up arrangement, in which faculty members served as advisors to individual schools. also petered out.

In Baltimore, a long-standing relationship between the schools and researchers at The Johns Hopkins University continued under the Clark grant. However, the Student Team Writing and Student Team Reading projects developed by university researchers, which promoted cooperative learning in the schools, were limited and research-oriented. They did not lead many teachers to explore curriculum and instruction beyond the constrictions of the projects themselves. And considering the lack of academic success in the Clark schools in Baltimore, as measured by the MSPAP, they did not make much of an impact on achievement. The TIPS homework program, however, did bring researchers and teachers together to focus on parent involvement.

Urban universities and colleges use surrounding schools for student teaching and research, and certainly those in the Clark sites have many projects underway. However, a lack of emphasis on middle grades reform characterizes teacher education and state certification systems in general. Higher education institutions in only eight states offer graduate middle grades accreditation programs. Both Kentucky and Wisconsin institutions have such programs, but the campuses that offer them are far from the Clark sites.

208

209

At Muirlands, teaching assistant Eric Burnett helps a student with his English.

Part III

212

213

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PROGRESS AND STRUGGLE: REFLECTIONS ON REFORM

The most successful schools and teachers in the Clark network significantly changed their attitudes and skills because deep professional knowledge and opportunities to share insights and experiences empowered them to do so.

Professional development that makes a difference in the classroom is consistent, ongoing, stretching, and inclusive. That is, teachers plan and conduct it as essential to their goals for academic performance in their school.

Successful principal leadership moves from management to empowerment of teachers, but this is a subtle challenge that requires its own set of critical skills and considerable support for the principals.

Efforts to involve low-income parents in urban middle schools must use a language and actions that convey a commitment by the schools to support parents and a message that the schools are family-centered.

Schools that know how to put standards and substance into the phrase "student-centered" also are more likely to produce higher student achievement.

As alike as urban districts and distressed urban schools may be, it is the differences in the structures around them that determine the course of reform.

Assessment policies are changing, and a critical factor in making sure that the changes do not repeat mistakes of the past is the inclusion of teachers and principals in the development of new assessments.

The influence of teachers' unions on school reform depends greatly on the extent to which unions adapt to reform agendas or remain inflexible—often because they function in a "union town."

Urban districts need a consistency of vision and purpose based on high achievement of all students in order to drive middle grades reform—or any systemic reform—through the maze of competing interests, instability, and politics.

School officials and outside funders need to cooperate on planning and evaluation of change initiatives with the goal of developing internal support for successful initiatives after outside support ends.

Urban school districts cannot abdicate their responsibility for seriously troubled schools.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Five years of experience and many evaluations later, these 12 schools in five urban sites had much to share. Moreover, their attempts to improve life chances for urban young adolescents were the first in the country to be connected into a national network around more than a single project. They bit into the whole apple. Thus their stories, enriched by each others' experiences, provide valuable insights into whole-school, whole-district change under the very trying circumstances of our inner cities. This writer's interpretation of those insights are scattered throughout the text.

But there are some policy implications broader than those discussed or so crucial as to need emphasis again.

KEEP THE VISION ABOVE THE WATER

One can wish fervently for stability in people and financing of urban districts, but it is not going to happen under our current governance system. Therefore, when a school board and district administration adopts a course of action to improve middle grades, or any aspect of their work for that matter, they should put in place assurances that the district will stay the course, no matter who is in charge. There is no other reasonable hook for this than much higher achievement by all students. The move toward content and performance standards is a step in that direction, provided it is backed up by sufficient resources for professional development and strong accountability measures. Districts should get it right the first time, developing plans based on a wide inclusion of teachers and parents guided by expert help. Once adopted, such plans ought to be open to modifications, but not shelved for what seems to be a better idea.

MAKE SURE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IS PROFESSIONAL

If urban districts want to assume responsibility for professional development, then, again, they should make sure they get it right. To provide a few scattered days during the year as set-aside for professional development and call it done is irresponsible. Every school in the Clark network now faces accountability measures, either locally or from the state, that require new

skills and greater knowledge of content. Anyone who teaches at the middle grades ought to be thoroughly steeped in early adolescent development. Teachers need time and consistent opportunities to learn from the changes they make in their classrooms, learning that should be deepened by sharing with their colleagues. The silver-bullet expert no longer will suffice. Urban districts need to conduct audits of their professional development programs, set principles for school professional development plans, evaluate funding resources and commit the necessary resources to what needs to be done, and allow flexibility in the use of time by schools. Then they should expect results from professional development.

TREAT PRINCIPALS AS PRECIOUS RESOURCES

As important as principal leadership is to middle school improvement, most Clark districts exhibited very unsophisticated strategies for selection or support of their principals. It is legitimate to send in a disciplinarian "Joe Clark" when the adults in a school have lost control of the students, but a principal who can right such a school in the water and then move it forward needs a bagful of skills. Strict discipline goes only so far. Middle grades students, whose testy nature comes with their developmental stage, will become engaged more eagerly when they believe teachers and administrators care enough about their learning that they are willing to change their attitudes and habits, too. Principals must know enough about content, instructional strategies, and adolescent development to create that kind of environment. However, it is not only principals in the most troubled schools who need support and professional development from their districts. They all do, if the district is sincere about improving student achievement. (They also need a salary schedule commensurate with the leadership required, surely as challenging as that of high schools.) Teachers and principals ought to move together on instructional changes, with principals providing the link to district accountability and available resources.

BRING HIGHER EDUCATION INTO THE ACCOUNTABILITY LOOP

No group was more conspicuously absent from the middle grades improvement table during the Clark initiative than higher education. Students spend at least one-fourth of their precollegiate years in the middle grades. Yet, universities focus little time on middle grades teacher education, often because state licensing and certification policies do not support separate attention. Nonetheless, urban campuses could be a strong sustaining force for urban middle grades reform. Beginning teachers who want to teach this age group need both theory and practice tailored to the middle grades. Those now teaching need access to appropriate research. They should learn about high content from content scholars, not just instructional experts. More important,

as urban middle schools expand their support network to include the community, urban universities have the resources across many relevant departments (sociology, urban planning, ethnic studies) to help teachers and administrators acquire collaborative understanding and skills. Such an approach, of course, would mean that responsibility for providing such professional resources to educators moves out of isolated education programs and into a university-wide commitment.

FIND THE PRESSURE POINTS FOR FAILING SCHOOLS

No school district should think it is performing adequately as long as any school is allowed to continue to slide downward. In the Clark network, literally hundreds of young people entered the middle grades and moved on to high school from schools unable to add much to their education as they passed through, except perhaps bitterness and anger. Until the district or the state finally acted, the schools could not internalize their failure to a point where they were willing to undertake profound changes. Waiting until the last resort wastes valuable time and young lives. Either districts or states need to identify such schools early and do something about them. They should intervene with technical help, timetables, and data that tracks progress more frequently than for other schools. In the end, however, parents and communities ought to have the power to demand and get improvements—or be able to make other choices.

TO THE FOUNDATIONS: CAVEAT EMPTOR

Foundations, or any sources of outside support for urban school reform, need to know the challenges within each individual urban district and assess the possibilities for making a difference. And be hard-headed about it. If the district leadership is not focused on student success and cannot demonstrate that it understands and can act on systemic reform, its promises and plans ought to be seriously questioned. Likewise, the relationships between the central office and the schools ought to be respectful and mutually supportive. There will always be some grumbling at both levels, but that should not get in the way of a willingness to work together on the same goals.

POSTSCRIPT

The problems of the inner-city urban middle schools in the Clark network sometimes obscure the truly important legacy of their five-year struggle for reform. That legacy is the triumph experienced by some schools, teachers, and students. It demanded hard, hard work that will never end. It required collaboration among many and took the comfort away from many others. It meant risk-taking. Yet, teachers gained confidence, and students achieved far beyond what had been assumed before both attempted change.

Even the Clark districts where middle school improvement fell far short of expectations are more sophisticated about systemic reform now than they were at the beginning.

A "pivotal conversation" with Clark staff about the need for vision motivated Oakland's Yolanda Peeks to organize task forces that developed a plan for the middle grades. The district now wants to convert all or most of the remaining junior high schools to middle schools. It is rearranging resources to provide equitable offerings in all schools no matter what their enrollment, and it hopes to place staff development under a Middle Grades Education Council.

Milwaukee's work on curriculum, standards, and new assessments at the district level provides a framework for reforms. The Clark grant "helped us understand we were tinkering around the edges of school change," says the new superintendent, Robert Jasna. As the Clark grant was ending, the school system adopted a school-to-work initiative that essentially embodies a districtwide reform plan. Of the 10 initial schools in the project, four were middle schools, including Kozy. Its partnership with businesses to provide experiential learning for students about careers had expanded from one teacher to a school-wide effort during the Clark years. The district's school-to-work program was to extend to 44 schools in its second year, integrating 11 middle schools into the curriculum changes and experiential learning of the school-to-work plan.

In Baltimore, a system of computerized curriculum resources for middle school teachers was completed as the grant ended, and plans were being redrawn for the city-wide middle grades institute that will embody a new reform initiative. The Lombard

224

225

Academy became a demonstration middle school, moving one grade at a time through innovations built around sound principles for the middle years.

The Clark districts share the same context for education reform in that they must educate very poor students with dwindling resources. Their teachers are often worn down by young folk whose hopelessness and lack of self-discipline make them reject the goals of the school. Nor do many urban teachers have the resources, facilities, and professional community they should have to succeed.

Some districts, however, are better able to organize support for teachers and administrators in raising student achievement than are other districts. Those that have greater success do so, not with a richness of resources or magic tricks, but with a special kind of integrity and civility in the relationships they develop with their principals and teachers. And with a firm idea about where they want the schools–and student achievement–to go.

NOTES

1 Rusk, David, *Cities Without Suburbs*, Woodrow Wilson Center/Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, MD, 1993

2 "Middle School Reform in Louisville: The View from the Classroom October 1994," memo to the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation from Education Matters, Inc., Cambridge, MA

3 "Better Teaching: The Key to Meaningful School Reform," Students First, Advocates for Children and Youth, Inc., Baltimore, MD 1994

4 "Improving Principals' Practice: The Influence of Professional Development on Principals' Work in Middle School Reform Efforts Supported by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation," Education Matters, Inc., Cambridge, MA, 1995

5 "Putting Standards In Their Own Words," Carol Barry, *Voices from the Middle*, Vol. 2, No. 1, National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, IL, February 1995

6 "Transcending the Traditional: Whole Language in the Transitional English Classroom," Mary E. Fipp, *Equity and Choice*, Vol. 10, No. 3, Spring 1994, Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA

7 "Expecting the Best from Students in Urban Middle Schools: A Report on the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation's Middle Grades Initiative," Educational Resources Group, Princeton, NJ, Winter 1994

8 Ibid.

9 Kerchner, C.T. and Koppich, J.E., *A Union of Professionals*, Teacher's College Press, New York, NY, 1993

EPILOGUE

BY M. HAYES MIZELL

Where does reform begin? In this incisive book, Anne Lewis shows us that true reform does not flow from wishful thinking, good intentions, or even from a foundation grant. Reform begins when school systems, administrators, and teachers acknowledge, even if only in their hearts, that they have not been as effective as students need them to be. Once educators understand that they and their institutions must change, they take the first step. Only when they actually seek to change, however, do they begin the long journey of middle school reform.

The Program for Student Achievement does not minimize the difficulty of this process. Often in our conversations with teachers and administrators, we observe that middle school reform is not just hard, it is damn hard. It is equally hard for foundations. We, too, must acknowledge that our best efforts have not always been good enough to yield the depth and breadth of reform we sought. Indeed, as Anne Lewis correctly points out, some schools actually regressed during their relationship with the foundation. While we are pleased that other school systems and schools used foundation resources to good effect, we wonder if we could have done more for those who fared less well.

We are especially grateful to the teachers and administrators who were our partners in middle school reform. Those on the receiving end of foundation grants can often measure in more than miles the distance between the foundation's offices in New York and the classrooms where we hope change will take place. We thank the educators for their tolerance and patience. They were pioneers in our mutual efforts to go beyond the structures and processes traditionally associated with middle schools to provide students with a more challenging education. This was, and all too frequently still is, unchartered territory. There was scant experience to guide them, and they struggled to find their own way.

The past six years taught us that there are educators eager to find new ways to better educate their students. As this book points out, however, teachers need equal measures of leadership, inspiration, and strong support; most of all, they need school systems that are focused and efficient. We know that when all of these conditions are present, middle school reform is possible, that it results in schools that are more

effective and students who learn more. Sadly, these conditions are not the norm, particularly in inner cities. Too many treat reform as a program or a project, a piecemeal effort that can be "installed" at little expense, personal inconvenience, or political cost. But reform is gritty and demanding work, frustrating because it requires changes in attitudes and behaviors that few of us would choose to embrace. Ironically, there are educators who make this choice, and continue to demonstrate, in the face of almost overwhelming odds, that they are willing to change what they think and what they do if that is what it takes to help their students.

When school systems and schools encounter the setbacks that are inherent in the reform process, it requires an extra measure of resolve to learn from these experiences and forge ahead. In that spirit, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation has renewed its commitment to systemic middle school reform and is applying some of the hard lessons we learned between 1989 and 1995. We have identified school systems committed to reforming all their middle schools, not just two or three, and with the will and capacity to do so. We have measured that capacity, in part, by whether each school system has made a strong commitment to education at the middle level, manifest in part by a coherent grade configuration for schools serving young adolescents and by an effective central office staff person who leads, coordinates, supports, facilitates, monitors, and assesses middle school reform throughout the district. We have also been more intentional in engaging school board members, superintendents, key central office staff, and union leaders in discussions about middle school reform and the goals and strategies of the Program for Student Achievement.

Our goals in 1995 are much sharper. In 1988 we held up the "three highs"–expectations, content, and support. Now we are much more specific in our goal for students in urban middle schools to demonstrate high levels of academic performance by the end of the eighth grade. This is our effort to encourage middle schools to adopt a more academic focus, albeit still within the context of supportive and developmentally appropriate learning environments. As the first step towards achieving this goal, the Clark Foun-

dation is supporting six school systems during 1995 to develop and adopt academic standards for what students should know and be able to do by the end of the eighth grade. Each school system will also establish district-wide student performance goals for the proportion of students who will meet the standards, beginning with the class that graduates from the eighth grade in June, 2001. We believe that if teachers, students, and parents are clearer about the desired academic results of students' middle school education, there is greater potential for collaborations to help young people achieve that goal.

Of course, academic standards alone will not cause students to perform at higher levels. There is no substitute for teachers who are confident in their knowledge of the subjects they teach, excited about engaging students in learning, and skilled in instructional strategies that both challenge and support students. Standards are necessary to focus the mission of schools, but unless schools insist that teachers improve their performance in the classroom, and help them do so, standards will have little practical meaning for most students.

We remain hopeful that school systems, administrators, and teachers can rise to these challenges. The foundation is committed to using its resources and influence to encourage school systems and their middle schools to provide the leadership and support educators need to enable students to meet these standards. We lack the magnitude of resources and political leverage to persuade school systems to alter bureaucracies or their priorities, but we are striving to identify urban systems with solid potential to implement standards-based, middle school reform. While our new initiative poses its own set of unique challenges, we are proceeding with greater clarity and confidence because of what we have learned during the past six years. For this, we are indebted to the rich experiences we gained from working with dedicated teachers and administrators during this period. We hope that they, too, will draw upon the lessons of the past to push ahead more confidently towards middle school reform.

M. Hayes Mizell is Director of the Program for Student Achievement at The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation.

Standards are necessary to focus the mission of schools, but unless schools insist that teachers improve their performance in the classroom, and help them do so, standards will have little practical meaning for most students.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Academy for Educational Development. *Middle Grades Education in an Era of Reform: Proceedings of a Seminar Series*, Spring 1993. New York, NY: Academy for Educational Development, 1993.

Academy for Educational Development,
100 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011

Ames, Nancy L. and Miller, Edward. *Changing Middle Schools: How to Make Schools Work for Young Adolescents*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc. 1994.

Jossey-Bass, Inc.
350 Sansome Street, San Francisco, CA 94104

Anderson, Britt. "Flexible Rostering." *Critical Issues In Middle School Reform*, No. 2. Philadelphia, PA: PATHS/PRISM: The Philadelphia Partnership for Education, 1993.

Tim Wilson, Critical Issues in
Middle School Reform Editor, PATHS/PRISM,
Seven Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Suite 700,
Philadelphia, PA 19103-1294.

Annie E. Casey Foundation. *The Path of Most Resistance: Reflections on Lessons Learned from New Futures*. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1995.

Free copies may be obtained from:
The Annie E. Casey Foundation,
701 St. Paul Street, Baltimore, MD 21202.

Arnold, John. *A Curriculum to Empower Young Adolescents*. Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association, Fall 1993.

Midpoints, National Middle School Association,
2600 Corporate Exchange Drive, Suite 370,
Columbus, OH 43231.
Midpoints papers are included in all levels of
NMSA membership. For nonmembers, single copies are
$3.00. Ohio residents must add 5.75% sales tax.

Borman, Kathryn M. and Johnston, J. Howard, eds. *Effective Schools for Economically Disadvantaged Students: School-Based Strategies for Diverse Student Populations*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1992.

Ablex Publishing Corporation,
355 Chestnut Street, Norwood, NJ 07648.

Bullard, Pamela and Taylor, Barbara O. *Making School Reform Happen: A Book of Hope about America's Schools–How Parents and Educators Can Revitalize Learning for Our Children*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1993.

Allyn and Bacon, 160 Gould Street,
Needham Heights, MA 02194, $24.95.

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*.

Washington, DC: Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989.

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development,
11 Dupont Circle, NW, Washington, DC 20036.

Carpenter, Laura. "School-Community Partnerships." *Critical Issues In Middle School Reform*. No. 5. Philadelphia, PA: PATHS/PRISM: The Philadelphia Partnership for Education, 1994.

Tim Wilson, Critical Issues in
Middle School Reform Editor, PATHS/PRISM,
Seven Benjamin Franklin Parkway,
Suite 700, Philadelphia, PA 19103-1294.

Center for Innovation in Urban Education. *Who's Behind Middle School Reform? A Directory of National Organizations*. Boston, MA: Center for Innovation in Urban Education, forthcoming 1996.

Center for Innovation in Urban Education,
Northeastern University,
50 Nightingale Hall, Boston, MA 02115.

Center for the Study of Social Policy. *Building New Futures for At-Risk Youth: Findings from a Five Year, Multi-Site Evaluation*. Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy, May 1995.

Center for The Study of Social Policy,
1350 Eye Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005.

Clark, Terry A. and Canner, Jane. *Expecting the Best from Students in Urban Middle Schools: A Report on the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation's Middle Grades Initiative*. Princeton, NJ: Education Resources Group, 1994.

Education Resources Group,
15 Chambers Street, Princeton, NJ 08542.

Education Commission of the States. *What Communities Should Know and Be Able To Do About Education*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, 1993.

Education Commission of the States,
707 17th Street, Suite 2700, Denver, CO 80202-3427.

Focused Reporting Project. *School Reform in Chattanooga: An Independent Report on Middle School Reform in the Chattanooga Public Schools*. Atlanta, GA: Focused Reporting Project, Spring/Summer 1995; Fall 1994.

Focused Reporting Project. *School Reform in Long Beach: An Independent Report on Middle School Reform in the Long Beach Public Schools*. Atlanta, GA: Focused Reporting Project, Winter 1995; Winter 1996.

All Focused Reporting Project reports are $5.00 and can be obtained from: New Growth Press,
889 Virginia Circle NE, Atlanta, GA 30306.

236

239

Frazier, Gloria G. and Frazier, Deneen. *Telecommunications and Middle Level Education: Surfing and the Art of Change*. Alexandria, VA: National School Boards Association, 1994.
National School Boards Association,
1680 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314.

Great Books Foundation. *Learning to Lead All Students To Higher Literacy: A Report on a Two-Year Project to Introduce Junior Great Books in Four Urban Middle Schools*. Report prepared for the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation's Program for Disadvantaged Youth, Fall 1993.
Great Books Foundation, 35 East Wacker Drive,
Suite 2300, Chicago, IL 60601-2298.

Gettys, Cynthia M. and Wheelock, Anne. "Launching Paideia in Chattanooga." *Educational Leadership*. Vol. 52, No. 1 (September 1994): 12–15.
Educational Leadership,
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development,
1250 North Pitt Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-1453.

Henderson, Anne T. and Berla, Nancy, eds. *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement*. Washington, DC: The National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1994.
Center for Law and Education,
1875 Connecticut Avenue NW,
Suite 510, Washington, D.C. 20009.

Holmes, Peter. "Structuring School for the Young Adolescent Learner." *Critical Issues In Middle School Reform*. No. 5. Philadelphia, PA: PATHS/PRISM: The Philadelphia Partnership for Education, 1994.
Tim Wilson, Critical Issues in
Middle School Reform Editor, PATHS/PRISM,
Seven Benjamin Franklin Parkway,
Suite 700, Philadelphia, PA 19103-1294.

Hopfenberg, Wendy S.; Levin, Henry M., et al. *The Accelerated Schools Resource Guide*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc. Publishers, 1993.
Jossey-Bass, Inc. Publishers,
350 Sansome Street, San Francisco, CA 94104.

Jefferson County Public Schools. *1993–94 Annual Report to the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation*. Louisville, KY: Jefferson County Public Schools, 1994.
Jefferson County Public Schools,
Division of Communications,
P.O. Box 34020, Louisville, KY 40232-4020.

Keith, Sarah. "Learning Based on Student Inquiry." *Critical Issues In Middle School Reform*. No. 4. Philadelphia, PA: PATHS/PRISM: The Philadelphia Partnership for Education, 1994.
Tim Wilson, Critical Issues in
Middle School Reform Editor, PATHS/PRISM,
Seven Benjamin Franklin Parkway,
Suite 700, Philadelphia, PA 19103-1294.

Lara, Julia. *Second-Language Learners and Middle School Reform: A Case Study of a School in Transition.* Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers, 1995.

Council of Chief State School Officers,
One Massachusetts Avenue NW,
Suite 700, Washington, DC 20001-1431.

Lewis, Anne C. *Making It in The Middle: The Why and How of Excellent Schools.* New York, NY: The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, 1990.

Office of Communications,
The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation,
250 Park Avenue, Suite 900, New York, NY 10177-0026.

Madaus, George, F.; Haney, Walt; and Kreitzer, Amelia. *Testing and Evaluation: Learning from the Projects We Fund.* New York, NY: Council for Aid to Education, Inc., 1992.

Council for Aid to Education, Publications Department,
51 Madison Avenue, Suite 2200,
New York, NY 10010, $15.00.

Massachusetts Department of Education. *Magic in The Middle: A Focus on Massachusetts Middle Grade Schools.* Malden, MA: Massachusetts Department of Education, 1993.

Massachusetts Department of Education, Division of
School Programs, 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148.

McLaughlin, H. James and Oldfather, Penny. "Gaining and Losing Voice: A Longitudinal Study of Students' Continuing Impulse to Learn Across Elementary and Middle Level Contexts." *Research in Middle Level Education*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Fall 1993): 1–25.

National Middle School Association,
2600 Corporate Exchange Drive, Suite 370,
Columbus, OH 43231.

Means, Barbara, et. al. *Teaching Advanced Skills to At-Risk Students.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc. Publishers, 1991.

Jossey-Bass Inc. Publishers,
350 Sansome Street, San Francisco, CA 94104.

National Association of Secondary School Principals. *Achieving Excellence Through the Middle Level Curriculum.* Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1993.

National Association of Secondary School Principals. *Inside Grade Eight: From Apathy to Excitement.* Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1990.

National Association of Secondary School Principals. *Promising Programs in Major Academic Subjects in the Middle Grades.* Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1992.

All three of the above can be obtained from the
National Association of Secondary School Principals,
1904 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091-1537.

242

243

National Center on Educational Outcomes. *Self-Study Guide to the Development of Educational Outcomes and Indicators: A Companion Piece to the Six Levels of Educational Outcomes and Indicators for Use by State Departments of Education, School Districts, and Local Schools.* Minneapolis, MN: National Center on Educational Outcomes, September 1993.

National Center on Educational Outcomes,
350 Elliott Hall, 75 East River Road,
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455, $12.00.

National Middle School Association. *The Developmentally Responsive Middle School: This We Believe.* Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association, November 1995.

National Middle School Association,
2600 Corporate Exchange Drive, Suite 370,
Columbus, OH 43231.

National Staff Development Council. *National Staff Development Council's Standards for Staff Development: Middle Level Edition* (Study Guide). Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council, 1994.

National Staff Development Council,
P.O. Box 240, Oxford, OH 45056,
$12.00 NSDC members, $15.00 Nonmembers.

National Study of School Evaluation. *Middle Level School Improvement: Focusing on Desired Learner Outcomes.* Fall Church, VA: National Study of School Evaluation, 1993.

National Study of School Evaluation,
5201 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041.

Neill, Monty; Bursh, Phyllis; Schaeffer, Bob; Thall, Carolyn; Yohe, Marilyn; and Zappardino, Pamela. *Implementing Performance Assessments: A Guide to Classroom, School and System Reform.* Cambridge, MA: Fairtest.

Fairtest, 342 Broadway,
Cambridge, MA 02139, $6.00.

Research and Policy Committee of the Committee for Economic Development. *Rebuilding Inner-City Communities: A New Approach to the Nation's Urban Crisis.* New York, NY: Committee for Economic Development, 1995.

Committee for Economic Development,
477 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10022, $18.00.

Rioux, J. William and Berla, Nancy. *Innovations In Parent and Family Involvement.* Forward by Anne T. Henderson. Princeton Junction, NJ: Eye on Education, Inc., 1993.

Eye On Education, Inc.,
P.O. Box 388, Princeton Junction, NJ 08550.

Rudner, Lawrence M.; Conoley, Jane Close; and Plake, Barbara S. *Understanding Achievement Tests: A Guide*

for School Administrators. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, 1989.

American Institutes for Research,
3333 K Street NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20007.

Smink, Jay and Peg. *The Evaluation Handbook: Guidelines for Evaluating Dropout Prevention Programs*. Clemson, SC: The National Dropout Prevention Center, 1992.

Publications Department,
The National Dropout Prevention Center,
205 Martin Street, Clemson University,
Clemson, SC 29634-5111.

Strahan, David B. *Putting Middle Level Perspectives into Practice: Creating School Cultures that Promote Caring*. Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association, Fall 1994.

Midpoints, National Middle School Association,
2600 Corporate Exchange Drive, Suite 370,
Columbus, OH 43231.
Midpoints papers are included in all levels of
NMSA membership. For nonmembers, single copies are
$3.00. Ohio residents must add 5.75% sales tax.

Urban Strategies Council's Oakland Middle Grades Reform Advocacy Project. *Listening to Youth!* Oakland, CA: Urban Strategies Council, January 1995.

Urban Strategies Council,
672 13th Street, Oakland, CA 94612.

Wagner, Tony. Foreword by Theodore R. Sizer. *How Schools Change: Lessons from Three Communities*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1994.

Beacon Press Books,
25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02109-2892, $25.00.

Wheelock, Anne. Standards-Based Reform: What Does it Mean for the Middle Grades? New York, NY: The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, 1995.

The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation,
Program for Student Achievement,
250 Park Avenuer, Suite 900,
New York, NY 10177-0026.

Wheelock, Anne. *Alternatives to Tracking and Ability Grouping*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators, 1994.

American Association of School Administrators,
1801 North Moore Street, Arlington, VA 22209-9988.

Wheelock, Anne. *Crossing the Tracks: How "Untracking" Can Save America's Schools*. New York, NY: The New Press, 1992.

The New Press,
450 West 41st Street, New York, NY 10036, $12.95.

246

247

Wheelock, Anne. *Empowered Teachers, Empowered Learners: Reform in Progress in Louisville's High*[5] *Middle Schools*. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council, 1994.

National Staff Development Council,
P.O. Box 240, Oxford, OH 45056,
$8.00 NSDC members, $10.00 Nonmembers.

PERIODICALS

High Strides: The Bimonthly Report on Urban Middle Grades. Available with membership from the National Middle School Association, 2600 Corporate Exchange Drive, Suite 370, Columbus, OH 43231.

Middle Ground (periodically published newsletter). National Middle School Association, 2600 Corporate Exchange Drive, Suite 370, Columbus, OH 43231. (*Middle Ground* is a benefit included in all levels of NMSA membership.)

Middle Matters (three times a year newsletter). National Association of Elementary Principals, 1615 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-3483. ($2.50 per issue)

Schools in the Middle: Theory into Practice (quarterly magazine). Available with membership from the National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1904 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091-1537

248

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ANNE C. LEWIS is an education policy writer in the Washington, D.C., area. *Believing In Ourselves* is the third report she has authored on the progress of the Clark initiative in the five cities. Previously, she wrote *Making It in the Middle*, an overview of middle grades reform in urban schools. For five years, she edited *High Strides*, a bi-monthly publication on urban middle grades reform first published by the Education Writers Association, now by the National Middle School Association. She is the national columnist for *Phi Delta Kappan* magazine and authored *Restructuring America's Schools* for the American Association of School Administrators.

The Edna
McConnell Clark
Foundation

250 Park Avenue

New York, New York

10177-0026